

THE DISRUPT-REFLECT-LEARN CYCLE: HOW RESILIENCE WORKS WITH  
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE TO SUSTAIN INTER-RELIGIOUS LEARNING

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by

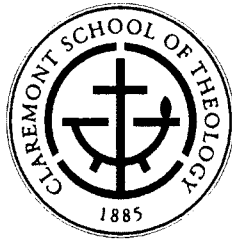
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May 2015

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has been presented to and accepted by the  
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## ABSTRACT

### THE DISRUPT-REFLECT-LEARN CYCLE: HOW RESILIENCE WORKS WITH REFLECTIVE PRACTICE TO SUSTAIN INTER-RELIGIOUS LEARNING

by

Stephanie Varnon-Hughes

All forms of education necessarily invoke and address disequilibrium as it precedes learning. Inter-religious education in particular deliberately sets out to invoke encounter with something new—the very “inter” as prefix points to a plurality of viewpoints: perspectives will be raised amongst, between, or against others. Sometimes, the encounters are fraught with surprise, discomfort, or unexpected angst; at other times, the encounters provide a bas-relief for deeper or renewed understanding of one or both perspectives. For these reasons, the process of inter-religious education demands that we be mindful about needs of students encountering alterity.

This study posits that resiliency and reflective practice are essential for inter-religious learning and aims to determine if these are indeed key ingredients, and to what degree they are necessary (or not). Previous research on resiliency has focused on children and young adults in therapeutic and school settings; some research has included belonging to a faith community as one factor in resiliency, but no one has connected resiliency as a trait that makes inter-religious learning more fruitful. Previous research on



reflective practice has focused on the facilitator, not the student. In religious education, reflective practice is an ingredient of spiritual development, but no one has yet aimed to discover how reflective practice influences inter-religious learners.

Because this study seeks to understand if and how certain capacities for learning are fostered in inter-religious educational settings, and in an emerging field, from practitioners who themselves have both contributed to a new field and spent a great deal of time reflecting on their work, grounded theory provides a phenomenological method to query those concepts allowing question and answering to resonate with one another. In two stages of interviews, open-ended questions are used to first elicit responses from ten professors and facilitators in inter-religious educational settings about their ideas, reactions, concerns, and practices, and then to explore whether and when these specific competencies arise in their settings. Then, “artifacts” of inter-religious education are examined, including syllabi, course and program descriptions, and institutional and organizational mission statements, to help build a thick understanding of how these competencies potentially emerge and engage inter-religious education. Finally, a survey of an even wider field of instructors, facilitators, and practitioners is conducted to confirm or validate conceptualizations of these competencies. The intuitive inquiry cycle is used to analyze data information.

As inter-religious education and dialogue can be discomfiting and transformative, it is likely that connecting resiliency and reflective practice to inter-religious education will benefit instructors, practitioners, colleges, seminaries, and programs that seek to develop and foster interfaith education and initiatives. This research is a starting point for considering how inter-religious educators can best facilitate spaces, methods, and

encounters that lead to the kind of personal and community transformation inter-religious education makes possible.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Mrs. Ann Johnson, my teacher for fourth grade, seventh grade, and many after-school and summer school arts programs.

For years, Mrs. Johnson commented generously and extensively on many of my stories and poems; she was this writer's first reader. Mrs. Johnson took time to hear me recite poetry, to give me extra books to read, to encourage my writing, and she treated me like a real author.

I decided long ago that when I wrote my first book, I would dedicate it to her.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

### Introduction

This study posits that resiliency and reflective practice are essential for inter-religious learning and aims to determine if these are indeed key ingredients, and to what degree they are necessary (or not). Previous research on resiliency has focused on children and young adults in therapeutic and school settings; some research has included belonging to a faith community as one factor in resiliency, but no one has connected resiliency as a trait that makes inter-religious learning more fruitful. Previous research on reflective practice has focused on the facilitator, not the student. Scores of studies have examined how practitioners from teachers, coaches, therapists, and managers can benefit from reflective practice; fewer studies have examined how reflective practice benefits the learner in those settings. In religious education, reflective practice is an ingredient of spiritual development, but no one has yet aimed to discover how reflective practice influences inter-religious learners. This study also explores how reflective practice can support resilience—allowing both capacities to best sustain engagement in inter-religious learning.

### Background

When one considers “capacities” for “inter-religious education,” it is essential to define both for the purposes of research and utility. The following capacities can be understood to be skills or dispositions that should be the fruit of successful interfaith engagement; note also the theologian or educator from which they emanate. They

include: a willingness to be wrong and/or hear difficult truths (Boys and Lee), the ability to take others' perspectives, the ability to practice a posture of openness (Knitter), an empathetic imagination (Berling), conflict fluency (LeBaron and Pillay), a narrative imagination (Shaw, Rogers), and the ability to move these skills and dispositions into other contexts (Berling).

As students involved in interfaith engagement spend more time, relationship, and practice with these skills and dispositions, they will develop the leadership and facilitation skills to help other groups or members of their communities engage these practices. However, there is an artfulness to these practices—all of these theologians and educators note that they—even as experts—continue to practice these skills and dispositions. Later, we can more deeply explore these notions of “artfulness” and “practice.” However, they are more complicated to assess. A related area for exploration is whether or not these capacities are or should be universal, or whether inter-religious education instead calls for a diversity of frameworks. That is, as we identify key competencies in inter-religious education, should we recommend them as required for most inter-religious settings? In later chapters, each competency will be examined and then connected to larger aim of inter-religious education.

*A willingness to be wrong and/or hear difficult truths and the ability to practice a posture of openness:* Developmental psychologists such as Piaget and Vygotsky, as well as religious educators such as James Fowler, note that humans develop in stages—when one encounters something new, she has to work to incorporate it into her previous understanding of the world. This is also a practice—as students or participants are open to other times when it is best to listen, and show willingness to hear and engage, they will



find those encounters less dangerous.

*The ability to take others' perspectives:* Perspective-taking practice can come about because of engagement with the arts (playwriting and performance, storytelling, mask-making) or through models of spiritual care and counseling (active listening, empathy and forgiveness practice). This skill is also related to critical thinking—one's ability to hold within her mind multiple viewpoints, including viewpoints that are very different, can help one read, learn, and think critically. Students studying law and debate, writers, and new physicians learning the art of diagnosing patients all benefit from perspective-taking practice. This practice is related to reflective practice, a key theme of this study.

*An empathetic imagination and a narrative imagination:* These are related to perspective-taking practice, and can also be fostered through the arts. In interfaith engagement, it is helpful for us to be able to imagine different horizons of time, family relationship, and emotions like shame and pride. It is necessary to be able to “read” the story of another with an openness of heart and a positive curiosity. When we are able to connect our small stories with greater narrative arcs, our engagement with others is enriched. This study will explore how narrative engagement can buttress and inform reflective practice, especially as a sustaining factor in resilience.

### Statement of the Problem

In short, as an emerging and interdisciplinary field, inter-religious education has yet to benefit from including a robust, canonical, agreed-upon set of competencies and measures. Depending on where in the world one teaches, at which kind of institution, and with what kinds of challenges, instructors and facilitators in inter-religious learning may

agree upon some key competencies but go about exploring and framing them in idiosyncratic, non-replicable ways. Rapidly, though, and with every national and international meeting of inter-religious teachers and practitioners, “standards,” a “canon,” and agreed-upon key competencies are being articulated and shared. As formal BA, MA, and “minor” programs of study in inter-religious education grow, formal data are needed in this area.

Supporting research questions include: What is the relationship between resiliency, reflective practice, and inter-religious learning? How do these two competencies develop in inter-religious learning? What are noteworthy events in the process? What facilitates the learning? What hinders the learning? Who are the key participants in facilitating this learning, and what are their roles?

Regarding the goals of inter-religious education, additional questions include: How can we describe the goals of inter-religious education (IRE)? How do educators articulate the value of IRE for students? What can participants learn through IRE? What capacities does IRE foster; what capacities *should* IRE foster? What capacities are necessary for IRE to take place?

### Significance of the Study

On one hand, research in resiliency and reflective practice have greatly influenced how parents, teachers, and caregivers support learners, and how institutions consider what factors help students succeed. These considerations have not been part of the discussion so far in inter-religious education. Also, because inter-religious education and dialogue can be discomfiting and transformative, it is likely that connecting resiliency

and reflective practice to inter-religious education will benefit instructors, practitioners, colleges, seminaries, and programs that seek to develop and foster interfaith education and initiatives.

All forms of education necessarily invoke and address disequilibrium as it precedes learning. Inter-religious education in particular deliberately sets out to invoke encounter with something new—the very “inter” as prefix points to a plurality of viewpoints: perspectives will be raised amongst, between, or against others. Sometimes, the encounters are fraught with surprise, discomfort, or unexpected angst; at other times, the encounters provide a bas relief for deeper or renewed understanding of one or both perspectives. For these reasons, the process of inter-religious education demands that we be mindful about needs of students encountering alterity. In *Integrative<sup>1</sup> Religious Education in Europe: A Study-of-Religions Approach*, Wanda Alberts note the “tension” or “deconstruction” that is part of inter-religious learning in the experiences of teachers and practitioners she documents. For example, she identifies many possible phases of inter-religious learning, and notes that “...understanding involves a reconstruction of meaning. Communication is codification. Understanding requires a deconstruction and reconstruction of codes.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, she writes, “Convergence and dissonance in the

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<sup>1</sup> As Alberts notes in her introduction, “integrative” in this sense means “students from different traditions are not separated in religious education classes.” Also, in her study, “religious education” consists of the teaching of multiple traditions, including those of the students—in this way, the students are learning in what we would call an inter-religious setting.

<sup>2</sup> Wanda Alberts, *Integrative Religious Education in Europe: A Study-of-Religions Approach* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG), 78.

dialogue and different horizons stimulate further reflection, conversation, and study.”<sup>3</sup>

Alberts’s many examples, from scholars and studies in programs across Europe, identify how and when dissonance both disrupt the teachers and learners and provide impetus for reconstruction, reflection, and understanding that comes after dialogue. The research in this study reflects both the general kind of disequilibrium that is present in general and mono-religious education as well as a particular kind of dissonance that comes when one’s “religiously interpreted realities, religiously interpreted experiences and religious interpreted norms”<sup>4</sup> can keep us from getting along. In naming while dialogue work is essential for his students, R., a Christian professor who teaches at a large, public, state university, points to how even initial experiences encountering religious difference can provide reflective impetus for positive stimulation towards integrative reconstruction. R. shared,

That’s why the dialogue thing is critically important in the community...Because it is beginning to say to people that, ‘You know it is actually safe that we are different. You are very disconcerted about this. But it is very safe that we’re different. And so here, why don’t you come up and we going to do it one month in the mosque, one month in the synagogue and one month in the church. If you are uncomfortable going anywhere else, come up when it is in synagogue. You know—you will sit in your own synagogue with a group of Muslims, a group of Christians, and three religious experts. You will watch that we can have two hours of civil conversation about topic that we can disagree on. Then we can all have kosher cookies and go home...there was no explosion and we were not fighting and we did not have to have police for security. Amazingly, people were quite shocked that happened in our northern suburbs.’<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Alberts, *Integrative Religious Education in Europe*, 168.

<sup>4</sup> Alberts, *Integrative Religious Education in Europe*, 39.

<sup>5</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

Many other interview participants gestured toward similar potentials for growth as aims for dialogue engagement. Alberts is not alone in connecting successful inter-religious learning to wider personal and social benefits; in the recommendations portion of this study, we shall aim to identify which reasons for inter-religious education are most compelling, and if there is one major impetus or a network of reasons for doing this work.

One of the aims of the social sciences is to better understand social interactions. Education—particularly constructivist education—works to build relationships between learning communities, and foster critical thinking and pro-social behaviors in community members. Finally, one aim of practical theology is to facilitate reflection upon spiritual formation and how theology can meet practice—in lived experience. This research is a starting point for considering how inter-religious educators can best facilitate spaces, methods, and encounters that lead to the kind of personal and community transformation inter-religious education makes possible. At the moment, there is not a great deal of consensus about *why* we teach inter-religiously, even if we agree that it's the right thing to do. Further, we lack current agreed-upon learning outcomes that are creative, rigorous, mutually enriching, and transferable to multiple contexts. One benefit to the research findings of this dissertation will be concrete competencies that we can implement, measure, compare, reflect upon, and use to build more enriching inter-religious curricula.

In the context of this study, resilience can be understood to be: a willingness to enter unknown or uncomfortable spaces, and/or an ability or desire to remain in unexpected encounters, and/or the skills to practice coping or connecting strategies that help one incorporate new concepts into personal learning frameworks. In this study, reflective practice encompasses the following possibilities: students or participants

receiving direct instruction or modeling in stepping back, reflecting, and connecting one's experiences with one's interior life. Time for pause and time or space outside of explicit instruction and activities to consider, question, daydream, build relationships, experience enjoyment or frustration, and *return* to the learning setting. In short, this study posits that reflective practice is both a necessary ingredient for successful inter-religious learning, and a byproduct of good inter-religious teaching. Significantly, this study posits that reflective practice strengthens resilience, and that the same time spent on reflection can lead to greater resilience. In a way, even though these two practices can be taught, modeled, and practiced separately, this study holds that competencies in one can lead to stronger competencies in the other, and practicing them together grows both competencies in a way that means the overall capacity to practice reflection and remain in learning spaces with tenacity is greater than one's capacities in either. In addition, research and practice in inter-religious education has not connected resilience with reflective practice; in particular, few inter-religious experts have begun to consider resilience as a potential capacity in inter-religious programs and education.<sup>6</sup>

### Research Question

This dissertation is in three parts: in the first, capacities from educational and developmental psychology are named and explored; these are the capacities posited as necessary and instrumental in *inter-religious* education. These are mapped onto inter-

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<sup>6</sup> This is changing: in the short period of months encompassing the data collection period of research for this study, resilience has begun to appear anecdotally as a capacity related to inter-religious education. In the second set of participant interviews, two interview participants mentioned resilience as a factor they knew about in their own teaching setting and one survey respondent noted that resilience was the next capacity her interfaith organization is seeking to explore.

religious education, and queried as to why and how they are so essential. The competencies explored are resilience and reflective practice. Research of these concepts in education and developmental psychology has not shown any connection between them and inter-religious learning or engagement—no research in this area has yet been done. And yet, we are at a point in the field where doing the kind of robust research that has marked educational and developmental psychology is necessary. This dissertation, in naming, mapping, and querying these competencies, is intended to be one small start to this work. The final portion of this study makes concrete recommendations both for next steps in research and for educators and practitioners to use to inform their teaching practice.

### Defining “Inter-Religious Education”

Religious education seeks to develop methods and techniques for participants to query questions of faith and spirituality, and which then leads to participants growing and becoming transformed. Thus, it follows that inter-religious education seeks to allow for spaces where participants from different faith traditions (or religious traditions, or ethical commitments) come together for learning, for dialogue, for mutual enrichment, and for movement out into changed<sup>7</sup> practice. In this study, ideas about education draw heavily upon constructivist practices, and so inter-religious education must also allow for participants to share their perspectives and wisdom, co-creating meaning and purpose. An

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<sup>7</sup> Especially when religion is part of the discussion, it is important to note that by “change” we do not mean conversion or even altered personal practice or beliefs. Instead, we are referring to the development of new ways of thinking, seeing the world, and acting—development that takes place in all learning. However, simply encountering new knowledge or information is not enough—learning must allow one to gain new habits, manners, or practices.

inter-religious educator will be a facilitator, shepherd, coach, or co-learner, but will not be teaching content...because the content of inter-religious education comes, by necessity, from and through those engaging in it.

Before analyzing contributions from theology, religious studies, and religious education, it is important to define key terms that are used throughout: “inter-religious,” “inter-religious education,” and “interfaith.” For the purposes of this study, “inter-religious” refers to a conversation or space shared by multiple dialogue partners. That is, within the conversation, lesson, experience, or encounter, participants name and can be known by their religious or ethical tradition, and this religion or ethical tradition can inform their participation in the space. “Inter-religious education,” is used as distinct from “religious education” or “multicultural education.” In the latter, differences are named and valued, but religious, faith, or ethical commitments are not necessarily made explicit or leveraged. In “religious education,” either the educator or material is mono-religious or ecumenical, or the starting place or frameworks come from Christian religious education. In contrast, “inter-religious education” seeks to have multiple voices as “teachers,”<sup>8</sup> a diverse body of learners, and attempts to bring into the educational space—either by material or through facilitation—time and space for learning *about* religious difference and for learning *how to learn or live with* religious difference.

Comparative theologians are typically rooted in at least one religious tradition. Comparative theology concerns itself with lived faith, so comparative theologians often

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<sup>8</sup> “Teachers” is bracketed because constructivist models of education also influence this work; some models for religious education, including those developed by Judith Berling, Mary Boys and Sara Lee, also demonstrate commitment to this philosophy, which deliberately shares power amongst facilitator and participants.



reflect on their own practices and their work can sometimes be confessional and personal. In contrast, scholars working in the area of comparative religious studies emphasize objectivity and personal religious affiliation is often explicitly left out of the equation. The practices espoused by the field of practical theology also calls one to be personally situated and to personally encounter—and reflect upon—the studied material. The work of two comparative theologians, Francis X. Clooney and Catherine Cornille, is particularly helpful as one attempts to understand the history of the emergence of inter-religious education as a field. Also, in the tradition of practical theologians who locate themselves in their work, it may also be that as a Christian, with some belonging in the Roman Catholic tradition, Clooney and Cornille's work, metaphors, and writing are especially palatable to me.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, these two can be seen as models in this work, as they work at the intersection of comparative theology and practical theology. Studies in inter-religious education also work at intersecting points of education, religious education, and practical theology.

Clooney describes the practice of doing comparative theology in his text of the same name; he writes, “like all forms of theology, comparative theology is a form of study.”<sup>10</sup> The idea of *practice* is instrumental to any recommendations for understanding the history and theory of inter-religious education. So, while Clooney's definition of what the study of religion entails works for comparative theologians, when we add, “practice,” we also have the beginning of a working definition for what inter-religious education

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<sup>9</sup> Tradition and practice in the field of practical theology require that I socially locate myself in this scholarship and study.

<sup>10</sup> Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 4.

might entail. While Clooney argues that in comparative theology “learning is sought for the sake of fresh theological insights,”<sup>11</sup> he defines interreligious dialogue as “point[ing] to actual conversations,” and interreligious theology growing out of interreligious dialogue “aimed at clarifying dialogue’s presuppositions, learning from its actual practice, and communicating what is learned in dialogue for a wider audience.”<sup>12</sup>

Clooney suggests that engaging in a posture of learning leads to new intellectual insights. Similarly, in inter-religious dialogue, we learn from one another—but this kind of learning influences both our scholarship and our personal religious commitments. We have here two poles—first, the concept that openness to learning rekindles and even creates new scholarship. This is an academic, or intellectual benefit to learning. Then, we have the concept that learning from one another—not from theological study, from text study, or from comparative religious work—can change us. We can understand “learning from its actual practice, and communicating what is learned” to indicate a need to turn from learning to communicating. That is, we learn, and then we turn to share our new insights. The idea of “return from learning to communicating” is important for this research because it is another manifestation of reflective practice, a major theme of this study.

In *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, Cornille highlights two important ingredients necessary for both teachers and participants in inter-religious education: hospitality and humility. That is, even though Cornille is a comparative theologian, and she names hospitality and humility as necessary for *dialogue*, once we start to consider

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<sup>11</sup> Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 10.

how inter-religious educators moved from teaching and learning in spaces that may have been inter-religious, but where the stated endeavor was to study comparative theology, valuable ingredients such as these were picked up by inter-religious educators. The history of inter-religious education has included space for academics and activists to identify deep needs (in students and in the world), respond to encounters with difference, and develop educational tools that best facilitate inter-religious teaching and learning. In this case, Cornille is speaking about dialogue; however, both hospitality and humility are skills or dispositions that are also found in the work of religious—and later, inter-religious—educators. In this study, many of the interview participants named either hospitality or humility as key capacities necessary for inter-religious learning and so it makes sense to attempt to understand whether or not they should be explicitly taught in inter-religious education.

For example, when describing students who do well in inter-religious dialogue events and cultural immersion experiences, R., a Christian professor who teaches at a large, private, research university, identifies the need for an affinity for meeting others and encountering difference. When asked about the capacities that help his students succeed in his classes and programs, R. notes that successful students find

that it is exciting and fun to meet different point of views and different life experiences. People who don't have that or for whom different points of views that make them nervous—then they have trouble, because they don't want to learn anything new. If you are motivated, then: how can you fall in love with difference?<sup>13</sup>

R.'s description of “falling in love with difference” is connected to the kind of hospitality and humility Cornille describes; it certainly means that a student will be willing to stay

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<sup>13</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

with difference for long enough to learn. R. admits that this can be frightening, that realization of difference can evoke fear; he describes one realization by saying, “All of a sudden, [realization that my world is very different than I first thought] comes to our consciousness and it makes it afraid.”<sup>14</sup>

However, as R. points out, good teaching and facilitation can help students remain in smaller places of discomfort as practice for larger disequilibriums. He describes using short stories, cartoons, or films about other cultures or religions to evoke curiosity. He imagines the “intrinsic motivation” to know more his students might feel, hoping they will say, ““I wish I could know more about that. I wish I did know more about that culture and how those people are... Well, I could go there. I could learn more about that.””<sup>15</sup> In the same breath, R. reiterates that even this positive desire can be threatening; he continues, “Most of them, they want to do that. They don’t want to be angry and afraid, a few do. They don’t want to be angry and afraid, they just don’t know any path in, and it is finding the path in to another culture for them.”<sup>16</sup> In his teaching practice, R. serves as a “host” (following Cornille’s cues about hospitality) and both models how to approach the bewildering or threatening nature of new cultures and religions even as he explicitly provides contexts for students to practice that skill themselves.

While Clooney described a method for moving from one pole to another (that is, from academic learning to relational learning), Cornille identifies practical postures that support this work—together, these become necessary dispositions for inter-religious

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<sup>14</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

education. Both require some kind of participation with an other, some degree of openness to the unknown, and at least considering that one's own commitments might be changed. Cornille began from her own Christian, theological position and recommends practices that can be applied to dialogue. They ought also to be applied to inter-religious education. In fact, participation with others and the ability to withstand disequilibrium should always be present in education. Piagetian constructivism reminds us that the assimilation of new knowledge first disrupts and then is integrated into one's understanding of the world. Inter-religious education in particular works best when we apply Cornille's dialogue recommendations to it because inter-religious education is particularly invested in holding together difference—different ideas, different people, different categories, and different practices. That is, any new information or encounter provokes learning; because inter-religious education already deals with difference, inter-religious educators ought to be especially mindful of allowing for construction of new meaning with the material of alterity.

For Cornille, hospitality cultivates an openness to possibilities outside one's own tradition, and humility helps people deal with limitations. Cornille defines both, writing, "Hospitality to the authentic truth of the other thus forms the sole sufficient condition for dialogue,"<sup>17</sup> and, "humility may...denote a genuine acknowledgment of the limitation and imperfection of one's insights and accomplishments, as indeed of all human realization and self-expression."<sup>18</sup> Again, the conditions Cornille claims for dialogue are

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<sup>17</sup> Catherine Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, 9.

directly transferable to conditions for inter-religious education. If inter-religious education is to be transformative (as all education should be, with the added spiritual/ethical component that inter-*religious* education brings), then both humility about what is known at this moment, and a fuller openness to *something entirely new and unexpected* must both be in play.

M. is a scholar of inter-religious dialogue and the philosophy of religions, and an instructor at a large, public university. When she considered how and when her students succeed in her world religions and dialogue courses, she reflects upon how one major capacity is simply getting students to a place where they are comfortable without resolution. M. began by sharing how students demonstrate critical thinking and varied perspective-taking in their writing, and then moved to wider examples of openness to the unexpected; she shared,

And so that's one of those places where I get to see like the 'thinking out' of a particular idea and then maybe asking a question in a different way and answering it in [a different way]. So I like to see that process, where they're not just reading it and answering it straightforwardly with a quick sort of response, but they really [are] trying to, having some issue with it. So that's exciting.

And then...in the classroom there, that's the other place, where you know when there is just a—a question just keeps going and then they...just sort of light up and say things like, 'Wait I've always thought this, but this writer makes it real like...' So there is this expression of discomfort and then reflection on it.

That sense of where they're thinking something out right then, and they're feeling something out, or discovering something.

And it often is not resolved right? But...I don't know, there are different experiences, sometime there's that lack of resolution that feels really unsatisfying. But then there's other times when it feels unresolved but it's all still very satisfying.

M.'s example reveals the related nature of comfort and the familiar, and yet the possibilities for comfort with the unfamiliar that inter-religious dialogue and encounter can foster. Indeed, if dissonance and openness are key factors in transformative education, the “unresolved but...very satisfying” will be a common situation for students and teachers in inter-religious learning.

#### Research Design, Qualitative Research, Data Collection and Analysis

This study uses ethnographic and grounded theory models of research. By interviewing instructors in inter-religious educational spaces (including, potentially, curricular and co-curricular activities, service learning events, interfaith leadership programs, or interfaith program planning), this research enables us to understand if and how resiliency and/or reflective practice relate to inter-religious education. To that end, this research will draw upon aspects of resiliency and reflective practice already present and noted in religious education as well, as recommendations for these competencies and their role in inter-religious education are developed. In addition, this research follows the lead of practical/pastoral theologians who locate themselves in relationship to their work, and take care to identify their own personal voice as it plays against emerging data. For example, Mary Clark Moschella identifies the way a researcher casts her own thoughts and experiences against the focus of her inquiry as “reflectivity and interpretation.” Moschella notes, “In reflexive reading, your responses become one of the subjects of your research”<sup>19</sup> and “You can see that at the level of *interpretation*, the researcher’s own

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 173.

ideas are brought into the analytical process more consciously and fully.”<sup>20</sup> This position of researcher is in contrast to the researcher’s voice when interpreting and analyzing data in other fields. For the purposes of this study, the researcher’s own ideas occasionally surface, especially when their relationship to the data fosters additional or pertinent meaning.

Through interviewing, open-ended questions are used to elicit responses about the instructors’ ideas, reactions, concerns, and practices. This study seeks to learn how resiliency and reflective practice—concepts from educational and developmental psychology—can be reconstructed to better understand and facilitate inter-religious education. Then, “artifacts” of inter-religious education are examined, including syllabi, course and program descriptions, and institutional and organizational mission statements, to help build a thick understanding of how these competencies potentially emerge and engage inter-religious education. Finally, a survey of an even wider field of instructors, facilitators, and practitioners is conducted to confirm or validate conceptualizations of these competencies.

The literature review for this study includes seminal texts, peer-reviewed journal articles, studies in developmental psychology, resources for educators, religious educators, and inter-religious educators, and reflections by practitioners. This study furthers the fields by connecting three currently unrelated concepts or fields: resiliency, reflective practice, and inter-religious education. Specifically, this study examines how capacities for resilience and reflective practice can be taught, and can benefit the learner in inter-religious education settings.

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<sup>20</sup> Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, 183, emphasis original.



The interview participants in this study answer open-ended questions. The questions investigate their experiences as teachers and facilitators in learning spaces (including classrooms, co-curricular activities, or short term intensive interfaith programs, for example.) Questions welcome them to reflect on the capacities they see as necessary for inter-religious learning, and the capacities they see fostered in their students during inter-religious learning.

Before each interview, each participant is reminded that they can ask to stop the interview at any time, and that they will have the chance to review final drafts of my written work, including to ask that certain quotes be removed.

Ten participants were recruited for two one-hour long sessions.<sup>21</sup> During the interview sessions, the consent form was introduced (first session) and reviewed (second session), and both began by asking if the participant has any questions. Then, open-ended questions are asked that prompt the participant to think about and talk about her experiences as an instructor in inter-religious spaces. After the first interview, themes were coded, re-read, and drawn out. All ten participants are also asked to share with their syllabi, course descriptions, and any related program descriptions or mission statements.

Finally, after the completion of all sets of interviews, a survey is shared as widely as possible. The survey includes questions about instances where resiliency and reflective practice were apparent (or not) in an instructor's experience in inter-religious education. The survey questions will allow us to best understand if the importance of these two

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<sup>21</sup> Ten participants were originally recruited, and ten interview participants took part in the first round of interviews. Only nine interview participants completed the second interview.

competencies in inter-religious learning is valid. This research will triangulate information from the survey results, the material from the artifacts, and from the interviews to get a richer and deeper understanding of how resilience and reflective practice might affect inter-religious learning.

Because inter-religious education is a relatively new field, and because it is interdisciplinary, there are fewer educators in the field than in other academic areas. Initial concepts and findings from the first set of participants are checked in their second interviews. In addition, this study uses syllabi, course descriptions, and program and institutional mission statements as artifacts to enrich sources for thematic coding and reflection. Finally, survey questions are constructed informed by the initial research and shared widely in the field. In this way, the study gets the most out of educators in an emerging field as well as validating findings.

The intuitive inquiry cycle was used to analyze data information. For example, after topic clarification and the literature review, data was collected and analyzed. Then, in “discussion” through journaling, listening, and reflecting upon the materials, the study moved into interpretation.<sup>22</sup> Rigor was maintained by checking new information and themes against operationalized definitions. Additional data was added until it reached a saturation point all participants participated in memo checking. If a surprising or unusual theme occurred, time was taken to memo, journal, and return to it with questions in subsequent interviews. Because the participants are the experts of their own stories, their

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<sup>22</sup> Frederick J. Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis: Phenomenological Psychology, Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis, Narrative Research, and Intuitive Inquiry* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2011), 250.

feedback was welcomed on a draft of their sections in the final report. Their approval and concurrence with the findings lends validity.

Since the data from the artifact analysis is triangulated with the survey responses, the study gives a robust understanding of whether or not, and how, resilience and reflective practice play a part in inter-religious learning.

### Limitations

The scope of my research includes exploration of inter-religious education in higher education, in North America, in seminaries and universities. This creates some limitations: the research will be Western-centric, and will keep us from understanding inter-religious learning in more diverse contexts (for example, in Indonesia where students have religious difference, cultural difference, and language difference). Because this research takes place in higher education in North American, it presupposes participants speak English, share North American understandings of “faith” and “interfaith,” and it privileges a white, hetero-normative, Abrahamic interfaith position. This is unfortunate, and is indeed one of the challenges of current interfaith studies. While the study attempts to be mindful of these limitations, one also hopes that these findings and conclusion can, in later research, be extended into other settings to explore further related questions.

### Summary

This chapter presents the research topic; it includes an operationalized definition of “inter-religious education” as well as identifies major strands of scholarship that have led to that field, and continue to inform it. After a brief statement of the problem and the

significance of the study, research questions are articulated and the design for conducting research is shared.

## Overview

This chapter introduced the study and Chapter 2 provides a literature review of resilience and reflective practice in their respective fields, as well as in religious education when applicable. Chapter 3 explores reflective practice as a possible source of inter-religious learning and Chapter 4 examines resilience as a potential capacity in inter-religious learning. In Chapter 5, the research study is outlined, questions are operationalized, and we analyze the instruments of research. Finally, Chapter 6 shares the findings of the research and Chapter 7 presents conclusions and makes recommendations for both further study and direct application.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review: A Story<sup>23</sup> of the Field

This chapter will share the story of the field, including tracing the literature in three distinct fields, including: resilience in developmental and educational psychology, reflective practice in professional development and then in education, and religious education. Neither resilience nor reflective practice have deeply encountered the area of inter-religious education; the newness of the latter and the lack of focus on individual student development from the former means that these three fields remain, at the moment, disconnected. Some aspects of reflective practice—even when not named as such—are vitally present in religious education, and experts in resilience very occasionally mention “religiousness” as one trait related to resilience.

One impetus of this research project is to connect the capacities of resilience and reflective practice directly to the work of inter-religious educators. Part of this process is to highlight where and when they are present in religious education, and to be clear about noting the differences and similarities in religious education and inter-religious education. To that end, some time will be spent sketching the influence of religious education on inter-religious education, so that we might understand how the capacities this study investigates can be best understood as they operate in inter-religious education.

By the end of this chapter, we will also understand why this research is necessary, why it is necessary now, and how inter-religious educators and leaders can use this study to inform their planning, teaching, and further studies in the field.

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<sup>23</sup> Many of the examples of literature in this chapter highlight the importance of metaphorical thinking. The naming conventions for the title and sections of this chapter also use the metaphor of story as both example and framing technique, in the spirit of Dewey, Schön, and Rogers.

## Prelude: Dissonance Defined, or: Why Inter-Religious Students Might Need to be Resilient

Before we begin exploring resilience and then reflective practice, it is important to be clear about what we mean by “risk” and “vulnerability” in inter-religious educational settings. One theme that emerged early, was echoed throughout the initial interviews, and was confirmed in second interviews, was the notion that “dissonance” is nearly always a factor in education generally, and in inter-religious education specifically. The following remarks, in answering the question,<sup>24</sup> “When students are able to do really well in interfaith settings, what habits, attitudes, knowledge or practice do you see in them that make that possible?” create a provisional portrait of dissonance in inter-religious learning settings that is helpful for our understanding of one challenge in teaching and learning.

Interview participant answers including the following remarks:<sup>25</sup>

*“The students do get frustrated, because they hear not dual narratives but multiple narratives. There are not two narratives. There are fifty narratives. The students do find this a little frustrating.”*

*“You sort of have to dialogue before dialogue. You are in interreligious dialogues, but you don’t know what the word ‘religion’ means. Learning the words we presume mean the same things, don’t mean the same thing is a huge part of this and people who are part of this have that kind of linguistic flexibility—That complicated business of overlapping semantic fields that don’t perfectly correspond [with] each other.”*

*“Everybody is insecure about their identity. So drawing borders is an important activity; it tells me who is in and who is out. At this moment with globalization and increasing pluralism in our increased society and context—the ability to draw those borders reassures me—that kind of reassures me I know who I am, because I can draw the borders. It is very disconcerting to discover that the borders are strange.”*

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<sup>24</sup> The interview questions can be found in Appendices E and F.

<sup>25</sup> These responses and their possible ramifications for inter-religious teaching will be explored at length in the recommendations chapter; here, it is useful to get a general sense of what inter-religious instructors mean by “dissonance” when they describe their teaching experiences.

*“The Palestinian boys who one moment throwing rocks at the wall and when they get bored ten minutes later, they plan soccer. We understand playing soccer but we don't understand throwing rocks at the world.”*

*“That disjunction between ‘different’ and ‘like’ is, I think, very important to see but it is very unsettling to see, all those [kids] just throwing rocks at the wall. ‘I want all those women frumpy wearing burqas like I saw in the Taliban. I want all of those people angry all the time rather than frumpy. I don't want to see young men and women not dressed like rabbis.’”*

*“I think there's some tension—so for instance if I'm in the room with a bunch of other, let's say, Muslim academics or theologians, it's a lot more difficult than, from—maybe because people understand experiences very differently and maybe something that I learned is not the same that some, that somebody else there [learned.]”*

*“Sometimes people are afraid to speak up because they're afraid to look bad in front of their co-religionists, or look ignorant in front of their co-religionists. Or be, you know...being embarrassed is a huge risk.”*

*“We all have things at stake and we all have histories we are a part of and the degree to which we take responsibility for those is really varied...what is my responsibility for a position that I might not personally hold but that my traditions have been responsible for perpetuating, causing a lot of harm in the name of—those are some of the harder questions that we try to get students to really wrestle with a little.”*

Here we see examples of students' frustration, fear, tension, disjunction, feeling disconcerted, insecurity, presumption, and complicated relationship with terms and norms once taken for granted—these are the emotions that arise in inter-religious dialogue and education that necessitate some care and thoughtfulness on our part around teaching and fostering capacities that enable students to grow through these feelings and learn.

## Beginning: Resilience, Reflective Practice, and Religious Education

### *Resilience*

In their 2010 *Handbook of Adult Resilience*, editors John W. Reich, Alex J. Zautra, and John Stuart Hall gather contributors from the fields of psychology, social work, public health and public policy, human development, community development, public affairs, psychiatry, child development, integrative medicine, and health

education—all who write on the study of resilience in their respective fields. Even a scan of these 43 contributors gives one a glimpse of how resilience has developed and grown into a foundation aspect of many related and interdisciplinary fields. Reich, Zautra, and Hall begin their preface by naming the two areas of resilience they wish to illuminate: focus on recovery, and focus on sustainability. While the latter is of most interest to this study, the former speaks to the roots of the field. The focus of this study is on sustainability rather than recovery because inter-religious co-learners are not necessarily traumatized, or in need of recovery. Instead, ideas about how resilience can lead to sustained interactions over time, and past the regular disruptions and expected difficulties of learning, will be valuable for understanding how to foster inter-religious learning.

Norman Garmezy, Ann Masten, and Auke Tellegen were three leading researchers in developmental psychology from the 1970s to current practice. They frequently conducted research and wrote together; their collaboration initially focused on a study of “vulnerable,” or “at risk” children in situations considered traumatic (most frequently in poverty or with mothers with mental illness.) This focus on vulnerability in children grew out of work on public health and social services in the 1950s and 1960s, where psychiatrists, psychologists, public health officials, and educators sought to understand how they could identify at risk children and provide them with extra support, as one way to end cycles of mental illness, trauma, and poverty. These social welfare programs sought to eliminate sickness, and so focus was on “the vulnerable.”

Garmezy, by the 1980s, was using a new term, “invulnerable children,” which reflects a shift in the field—now, researchers were focusing on the positive attributes of certain children and adults. Instead of describing and writing about what their contexts



lacked, psychologists and educators now spent time attempting to understand the positive traits these individuals somehow had that allowed them to flourish despite disaster, illness, or systematic deprivations. As Reich, Zautra, and Hall sum it in their introduction, “The [changed] resilience paradigm suggests that healthy reactions to risk factors are the norm, not the unusual reaction for individuals and communities.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the field as a whole began to study not just “recovery,” or how individuals successfully navigated grave challenges, but “sustainability,” or how individuals—and, increasingly, entire communities—persevere and thrive. Reich, Zautra, and Hall borrow from the field of ecology and propose that

the natural course of one’s life has a forward lean toward engagement, purpose, and perseverance...from this perspective, resilience is expected to extend beyond the boundaries of a person’s capacity to stave off pathological states, or a community’s ability to recover from a disaster; thus, it includes sustaining pursuits of the positive.<sup>27</sup>

This inclusion of “pursuits of the positive” is the newest development in the field of resilience. Coupled with the addition of considering the resilience of entire communities (as well as whether or not resilience is a Western trait, which is still a developing aspect of this field), we see the emerging front edge of resilience research. Both the focus on positive attributes and querying how communities learn and thrive together will be essential for this study.

Until the late 1980s, religion was not studied as related to resilience. Even then, not until the 2000s have researchers begun to connect “religiousness,” “religion,” “spirituality,” “religious coping,” “religious coping strategies,” “religious problem-

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<sup>26</sup> John W. Reich, Alex J. Zautra, and John Stuart Hall, eds., *Handbook of Adult Resilience* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010), xii.

<sup>27</sup> Reich, et al., *Handbook of Adult Resilience*, 6.

solving,” “church-based social support,” “religious beliefs,” “religious practice,” or “faith-based pathways to hope” and resilience. This research frequently focuses on individuals, and to a lesser extent, families or communities, who are experiencing sudden trauma, including, for example, cardiac disease, cancer, the September 11, 2001 US national crisis, depression and other mental illnesses, HIV/AIDS, terrorism, sexual assault, social isolation, domestic violence, psychiatric and substance abuse disorders, bereavement, hypertension, coping with incarceration, working as a hospice worker or caregiver to those with mental illness, the Gulf War, and floods or other natural disasters. Interestingly, in the field of resilience generally, researchers no longer focus on trauma but tend to focus on the positive traits of the individuals with whom they work. However, when researchers look at religiousness as it relates to resilience, they nearly always find a population who has experienced some kind of trauma, and then begin the study. Perhaps the relatively recent emergence of religiousness as a trait within resilience means that researchers examining religiousness and resilience will follow the earlier pattern in the field and move to looking at religiousness in non-traumatized populations as their subsection of the field grows. In the meantime, though, religiousness is most frequently treated as a coping mechanism for those in pain, and rarely examined as a trait that engaged, healthy participants in dialogue or educational endeavors might either have or need to flourish.

Current leading voices studying religiousness and resilience include Kenneth I. Pargament, a professor of psychology interested in the role of religion and mental health; Horald G. Koenig, a psychiatrist serving as director for the Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health at Duke University; Amy Lee Ai, a psychologist and researcher

working in family medicine and social work; Bu Huang, a psychologist working in adolescent psychology and social work; and Christopher Peterson, a professor in positive psychology who also writes popular books and columns on cultivating a meaningful life. Pargament's main area of focus has been "religious coping," including using aspects of faith beliefs and practices to deal with life's hardships; his work has been influential on others working in this area; many works cited include ideas originating from Pargament's ideas and studies.

In *Handbook of Adult Resilience*, Pargament and colleague Jeremy Cummings contribute the only chapter in the book dealing with religiousness, entitled "Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor." In identifying the smaller and less examined nature of religiousness as a positive attribute in psychology and resilience studies, Pargament and Cummings note that until the 1980s, the main sources of researchers discussing the role of religion were Clifford Geertz, Émile Durkheim, and Sigmund Freud. Needless to say, these three and their contemporaries treated religiousness as a crutch for coping used by women and the weak, and did not consider it a healthy aspect of fully engaged adults. As Pargament and Cummings politely put it,

In spite of the fact that the founding figures in psychology viewed religion as central to an understanding of human behavior, the field of psychology largely neglected religious issues for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When religion was considered, it was often viewed as a source of pathology, measured by a few global religious items, and explained in terms of purportedly more basic phenomena.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Kenneth I. Pargament and Jeremy Cummings, "Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor," in *Handbook of Adult Resilience*, ed. John W. Reich, Alex J. Zautra, and John Stuart Hall (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010), 193.

In this book chapter, Pargament and Cummings make the explicit move to examine “religion as a source of strength rather than weakness;”<sup>29</sup> the work of Pargament’s career and the arrival of this 2010 book may signal a move similar to the general field’s shift from “vulnerable” to “invulnerable” heralded by Garmezy and Masten. Particularly important to the work of this study is Pargament and Cummings’s noting of “religion and meaning-making resilience,” where they draw upon the ideas of Crystal L. Park and Susan Folkman, who in 1997 created a model illustrating how meaning-making emerges in times of strength.

Park and Folkman create a map that documents how an event, when disrupting the global meaning we think we understand, creates a sequence of events they name “reappraisal;”<sup>30</sup> like Dewey and Schön before them, Park and Folkman attend to how we humans handle “incongruity” in our daily lives, especially when our beliefs and goals are disrupted enough to cause stress. Park and Folkman use “global meaning” to include our general assumptions and understandings and “situational meaning” to define the new understandings that grow out of various life events.<sup>31</sup> Pargament and Cummings continue with this framework, noting, “one facet of global meaning that is particularly relevant to religion is the belief that one’s life has an ultimate purpose.”<sup>32</sup> Using this framework,

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<sup>29</sup> Pargament and Cummings, “Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor,” 195.

<sup>30</sup> Crystal L. Park and Susan Folkman, “Meaning in the Context of Stress and Coping.” *Review of General Psychology* 1, no. 2 (1997): 117.

<sup>31</sup> Park and Folkman, “Meaning in the Context of Stress and Coping,” 116.

<sup>32</sup> Pargament and Cummings, “Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor,” 197.

Pargament and Cummings include examples from various research projects with patients with HIV/AIDS, parents of children who had died violently, and individuals coming to terms with a new and permanent disability—this research supports the idea (introduced in Park and Folkman’s framework and confirmed by Pargament and Cummings) that those who have resources of faith or systematic belief do better in these kinds of situations than those who do not. Pargament and Cummings write,

it appears that religion plays a role in multiple levels of the meaning system. It may establish a foundational meaning system that orders the individual’s understanding of the universe and particular events. When a situation does not fit the global meaning system, religion can also help put a positive spin on the stressor.<sup>33</sup>

Those of us in the worlds of religious and inter-religious education might very nearly roll our eyes with an, “Of course religion plays a role in meaning making systems,” but it’s important, in this research, to remember how currently disconnected are resilience research and religious education (let alone inter-religious education). At this point in the literature review, we now have a good sense of what work has been done, how it connects to the study at hand, and how far we shall have to work to connect these various yet related fields of study.

If resilience is not commonly considered or studied by inter-religious educators, why does this study consider it to be a skill related to inter-religious education? Even thoughtful teachers often forget that for much of the learning their students demonstrate, some processes are hidden. This invisible capacity building can lead an instructor to

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<sup>33</sup> Pargament and Cummings, “Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor,” 199.

believe that certain challenges are not present, or positive outcomes are related solely to her teaching practice and not from other areas in students' lives.

For example, if an instructor relies on lecture to deliver most information, and one of her students demonstrates the intended outcomes of the course in an exceptional way, she may think her student benefitted from the lectures. If the student was not a verbal-linguistic learner, he might in fact have succeeded in the class because he had a great relationship with his roommate, who was able to talk about the concepts of the class and provide necessary discussions that helped the student finally in fact understand and apply the concepts.

For example, in a world religions class, intended outcomes might include providing students with knowledge about the world's major religions, encouraging students to explore traditions outside of their own, and helping students demonstrate their abilities to compare and connect differences. An instructor for such a class might charismatically and memorably provide rich information and activities in every class, but provide no time for pause or model no ways for students to deal positively with the stress of encountering disruptions to their worldviews. However, students might use social time with roommates and classmates on campus and outside of class to process course content, to help one another understand living examples, and for students to say to one another, "That really made me worry about whether or not my priest has all the answers, too. Here's how I decided that was okay, at least for now."

Through friendships, social interaction, time for fun and rest, the student is able to successfully navigate and incorporate encounter with difference. And yet, if we ask the

professor, “What did you do to successfully help students achieve the outcomes of the course?” she might answer, “My lectures included details about different traditions, examples of how people from different backgrounds get along, questions for further thought, and recommendations about what they can do when they are out in the field.” Her students’ meeting of these outcomes may only be partly related to her direct actions. Her students’ successes are in some ways invisible.

Specifically, if students are resilient, they may be able to find and use resources to succeed in a class whatever the instructor does. If students are not resilient, their failure to achieve course outcomes may mystify even the most engaged instructors. If students find time to reflect, debrief, decompress, rest, and reengage on their own, they are able to successfully integrate the new information, even if the instructor does not intentionally make room for reflective practice. Indeed, when survey participants were given the option to make additional comments at the conclusion of the survey, one participant admitted, “If I want to present the new material with the subtlety and depth that leads to serious reflection, I probably don’t have time for that to actually happen in the course structure. But I do expect it to be built into their lives.”<sup>34</sup> One aim of this study is to demonstrate that reflective practice is so necessary that we cannot endeavor to educate inter-religiously unless we commit time and resources to it; similarly, this study intends to demonstrate that reflective practice builds capacities for resilience in a way that allows students to better encounter difference and dissonance, and then better learn—and then lead—inter-religiously.

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<sup>34</sup> Appendix G.3: Survey Instrument Questions and Results.

And so, part of this research involves listening for places where outcomes were reached but instructors might not yet have considered why. Or, to put it another way, even if we state the outcomes and describe what we will do to lead students to that place, much of students' lives are unseen or unnoticed in our courses and programs. In the first round of interviews, this study sought to understand what was happening generally in the participants' learning. While this researcher listened carefully for references to reflective practice or resilience, the first portion of interviews gave a general landscape of inter-religious teaching and learning.

### *Reflective Practice*

Google Scholar is a web-based tool that allows researchers to track newly published scholarship in specific fields; while the studies it tracks, being new, are not of much value in a study such as this, attending to the development of related fields allows one to "take the pulse" of current scholarly interest in the field of reflective practice. In the period from September 1, 2014 to October 21, 2014 Google Scholar Alerts sent notices of the following newly published articles,<sup>35</sup> all within the field of reflective practice: "Consolidating 'Reflective Practice': Development at the End of a Professional Doctorate in Counseling Psychology," "Adaptive Teaching: Reflective Practice of Two Elementary Teachers' Visions and Adaptations During Literacy Instruction," "How Might Reflective Practice Help Athletes to Develop More Accurate Perceptions of Performance as a Way of Improving Future Development," "Reflective Social Work Practice, "Practice Wisdom Meets [Family and Child Care] Program Logic-Reflective

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<sup>35</sup> While none of these articles were used for the literature review of this study, a scan of their topics and related fields gives us an indication of the professions that currently embrace reflective practice.



Analysis of the Program Logic Model in Practice,” “Just Do It: Action Learning as a Catalyst for Reflective Practice on an MBA Programme,” “Towards an Interactional Approach to Reflective Practice in Social Work,” “Reflective Practice in Nursing Care,” “Reflective Practice and Leadership in Medicine and Medical Education,” “Design Education: Fostering the Conditions for Transfer Through a Structured and Critical Approach to Reflective Practice,” “The Relationship Between Teacher Quality and Reflective Practice,” “Crowdsourcing as Reflective Political Practice: Building a Location-Based Tool for Civic Learning and Engagement,” “A Model for Using the Reflective Learning Journal in the Postgraduate Translation Practice Classroom,” “Methodological Innovation, Masculinities and Critical Reflective Practice [in the Teaching Men Project],” “When Microblog Meets Microteaching: A Case Study of Chinese K-12 Pre-Service Teachers’ Experiences of Using Microblog in Their Reflective Practice in Microteaching,” “Reading Instruction, Reflective Practice and Student Engagement in Elementary School: A Kindergarten Case Study,” “Reflective Practice Using Music-Based Program to Support Self-Awareness and Mental Health with Women Refugees from the Middle-East,” “Reflective Practice in the Library and Information Sector,” “Reflective Practice, Collaboration, and Stakeholder Communication: Where does the Field of Evaluation Stand?,” “Uncovering Middle School’s Teachers’ Perceptions About Learning: A Reflective Practice Approach,” “Reflective Practice Through Journal Writing and Peer Observation,” and “Reflective Practice in a Coach Education Practicum.”

This variety of titles reflects the general contours of current research in reflective practice: most teacher educator programs incorporate reflective practice, therapists, social

workers, nurses, and others in the caring professions are familiar with the field, writing teachers and writing center directors frequently utilize reflective practice techniques in their program building, and those in the business and information technology worlds increasingly have access to ideas from the field.

This section of the literature review will focus on the genesis of reflective practice and how it traveled to become an essential part of educator training, as well as how reflective practice is used (even by other names) in religious education. Reflection is an intrinsic part of both self-understanding and of constructivist education. In addition, mono-religious education often includes spiritual reflection practices that are related to general aspects of reflective practice. For these reasons, this study posits that reflective practice will be a necessary ingredient for compelling and transformative inter-religious learning. Finally, we will analyze the fact that reflective practice inevitably focuses on the facilitator or practitioner, and never on the student.

Donald Schön's 1983 *The Reflective Practitioner* facilitated the development of reflective practice as an ongoing skill that could be strengthened into something akin to virtuosity for professionals (such as architects or psychiatrists). For Schön, the ideas of "puzzling" and "reflection-in-action" are key. He provides examples and reflects upon them, developing his theory that with practice, professionals can create new schema when encountering disruptions in their daily work and grow the variety and type of responses they have for confronting challenges. Despite the fact that Schön, in his initial work, focuses on neither teachers nor adult learners (outside of the learning they do to grow as professionals), his framing of problem-solving and puzzling are directly applicable to education. Indeed, Schön draws from Dewey and the fingerprints of Piaget are also

present. Dewey's influence on current forms and manifestations of reflective practice are not as readily apparent, but his work on inquiry, metaphor, and reflecting on thinking remains essential to understanding this area. In this section, we will begin with Schön's work as he is the inarguable founder of reflective practice as we know it, but end with Dewey's work on inquiry and copulas because Dewey's writing about thinking connects every other aspect of reflective practice, even (and maybe especially) into the area of inter-religious education.<sup>36</sup>

Schön is interested in our ability to respond to changing challenges with creativity; he posits that when we reflect upon the way we respond, we get better at solving problems. As Schön puts it, "In the most generic sense, to experiment is to act in order to see what the action leads to. The most fundamental experimental question is, 'What if?'"<sup>37</sup> The process of asking one's self, "What if?" becomes a galvanizing, life-affirming practice that allows one to connect prior experience and knowledge to the current context, and to resist foreclosing judgment and wait for additional insight. Later, we will apply Schön's simple question directly into the milieu of inter-religious education. Initially, Schön was struck by the fact that many experienced and intelligent professionals were gifted with knowledge about their jobs, but seemed unable to deal

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<sup>36</sup> John Dewey's work is foundational in regular education, and so also in religious education, particularly when educators focus on fostering inquiry in students. Dewey has not apparently provided an explicit source for literature in the field of inter-religious education, but his work essentially permeates general religious waters enough that he turns up in some aspects of inter-religious education even when not named. In this study, Dewey will be referenced whenever possible, especially in relation to reflective practice and inter-religious education.

<sup>37</sup> Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 145.

with the disruptions of working life. He noticed, “As the tasks change, so will the demands for usable knowledge, and the patterns of task and knowledge are inherently unstable.”<sup>38</sup> Again, this notion of dealing with situations that are “inherently unstable” will provide rich insight when we come to understanding key competencies for inter-religious education because fruitful learning can come from encounters that hold multiplicities of possible views or outcomes. Schön called these unstable situations “messes.”<sup>39</sup>

Schön also noticed that professionals were often challenged by “the multiplicity of conflicting views”<sup>40</sup> when they sought answers to their dilemmas. And yet, more multiplicities often mean one is working in richer or more challenging contexts. Few of us wish for more boring work lives; how do we balance our intellectual development and expertise with places of “messiness” that we encounter and might resist? Schön connected this challenge with the work of self-awareness, which leads to reflective practice; he writes,

In sum, when leading professionals write or speak about their own crisis of confidence, they tend to focus on the mismatch of traditional patterns of practice and knowledge to features of the practice situation—complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict—of whose importance they are increasingly aware. Surely this is a laudable exercise in self-criticism.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 17.

<sup>41</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 18.

Complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict—not only are these prevalent in professional contexts, they are the very stuff of education. We teachers attempt to gently create complexity so that our students might build creative strategies for addressing uncertainty in all places and forms. As Schön puts it, students (of all sorts) must live in a space that “[has] to do with the relationship between changing things and understanding them.”<sup>42</sup> One role of educators is to make that space habitable. For example, J. is a Christian professor of interfaith studies teaching in a seminary with an ongoing relationship with a nearby rabbinical school. When she reflects on how to foster positive inter-religious learning capacities in her classes, she describes wanting to make those spaces not only habitable, but inviting for the kind of work she deems necessary. J. shares,

Creating a space in the classroom where people were invited to be a little vulnerable, appropriately vulnerable—to share a full spectrum of who they are required modeling integration, modeling a little vulnerability, modeling a little playfulness, modeling risk taking. At the same time, creating a space for risk-taking also required dependability, hard work, attention to detail and responsiveness on my part as the professor.<sup>43</sup>

We note that such a space is amenable to risk-taking, reflection, vulnerability, as well as other positive inter-religious learning capacities. In the field of reflective practice, teacher educators often use reflective practice as a means to uncover possibly fruitful ways to live with “changing things.”

By 2005, when Germaine L. Taggart and Alfred P. Wilson write *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers: 50 Action Strategies*, reflective practice is considered so

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<sup>42</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 147.

<sup>43</sup> J., in discussion with the author, October 17, 2014.

essential that teacher educators develop ways to foster and assess reflective practice in novice teachers. *Promoting Reflective Thinking* includes a “plan of action for continued growth in reflective thinking,” with particular attention to the space between understanding things and changing them, or, as Taggart and Wilson notice,

A strategic plan of action will allow practitioners to use what has been learned about reflection to create a long-range plan that incorporates existing and newly acquired schemata and continual feedback. Through such a plan, the natural tendency of adults to problem solve and to resolve discrepancies between what is and what should be addressed can be enhanced.<sup>44</sup>

Taggart and Wilson’s text is an excellent example of how far reflective practice has come in 22 years because it has all of the representative hallmarks of a rich and contemporary text for teachers and teacher trainers: it’s full of worksheets, practice lesson plans, places for on the spot reflection, small case studies, recommendations, and suggestions from master teachers. It’s divided up into fifty action plans that are welcoming, do-able, and avoid overwhelming the reader or teacher with too much at once. Like any good practice, reflective practice via Taggart and Wilson is about jumping in and starting.

We also see a direct link between the kinds of thinking Schön encouraged and the activities that have made their way into the reflective teacher’s repertoire. Taggart and Wilson write,

Strategies used to promote reflective thinking...include observational learning; reflective journals; practicum activities, such as reflective teaching and microteaching; mental-model strategies, such as metaphors and repertory grids; narrative strategies, such as story, autobiographical

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<sup>44</sup> Germaine L. Taggart and Alfred P. Wilson, *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers: 50 Action Strategies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2005), xii.

sketches, and case study; establishing technology-enhanced learning communities; and action research.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, just as the meta-cognitive ability to make choices in new situations is essential to Schön's project, Taggart and Wilson's activities are intended to foster "the ability to make defensible choices and view an event with open-mindedness is also indicative of reflecting at a dialectical level."<sup>46</sup> Taggart and Wilson's recommendations and strategies—as well as their groundedness in Schön's lineage—are common traits amongst teacher education literature that supports reflective practice in teachers. However, few teachers have made the move to including direct instruction in and modeling of reflective practice for *students*. This issue is discussed at length in Chapter 3.

Schön himself often uses figurative language in his attempts to describe the artfulness with which one demonstrates the capacity of reflective practice. Taggart and Wilson emphasize the importance of metaphorical thinking—from their elucidation of the power of metaphor, we can move directly into the field of religious education, where the power of s/Story is honored and sought after. Schön describes the tricky nature of putting one's finger on exactly how to frame a new puzzle into existing schemas of experience; he writes,

When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of

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<sup>45</sup> Taggart and Wilson, *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers*, xii-xiii.

<sup>46</sup> Taggart and Wilson, *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers*, 5.

action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is *in* our action.<sup>47</sup>

“Often we cannot say what it is we know.” Indeed, one challenge of dealing with intellectual, emotional, or spiritual disequilibrium is even beginning to name what it is we’re facing. One benefit of highlighting the cognitive process of “knowing-in-action” and recognizing it as part of a practice is that it takes the pressure off finding immediate answers or even finding one answer at all. Instead, our focus on opening a space of not-yet knowing-in-action favors process over immediate action.

Metaphors are one tool for dealing with “descriptions that are obviously inappropriate.” Metaphors may allow us to practice thinking about a new concept or situation before we are ready to embrace it fully. Taggart and Wilson focus on working with metaphors in reflective practice because they recognize that teachers who can learn to reach for metaphoric thinking will grow in reflective practice. In addition, thinking in metaphors is a process that can be modeled and shared with others, which creates the opportunity for communal meaning-making and reflective circles of practice, both of which support pre-service teachers and reflective practitioners in any profession. Taggart and Wilson identify several key aspects of metaphors as tools for reflective practice, writing:

Metaphors can: aid in self-exploration of beliefs and values, help form boundaries and conditions for members, assist in simplifying and clarifying problems, help to summarize thoughts, enable and limit meaning, help develop alternative ways of looking at a topic (problem reframing), serve as bridges between a schema and new constructs, help form judgments about educational issues, assist with communication of

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<sup>47</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 49. Emphasis original.



abstract ideas, demonstrate underlying connections, [and] gain insights into what is not yet understood.<sup>48</sup>

We can imagine that if one were creating a reflective practice workshop, and facilitating techniques to aid reflecting upon what is currently unknown and what is already known, the use of metaphors as described by Taggart and Wilson could serve as tasks to welcome novice reflective practitioners.

In his description of why current students, residents of his city, and even US Christians currently experience visible signs of dissonance and anxiety, R. noted that two poems<sup>49</sup> from the Victorian period perfectly capture some of what Christians are experiencing in his religiously diverse, multicultural, multiracial, Southern US city. When elaborating on the idea that Christians in his city are finally realizing their city might not be Christian, he shares,

There is this massive Victorian anxiety about the loss [of] faith and that in Yeats's 'The Second Coming.' These poems resonate today because many of the same things are in our culture and in our midst. That anxiety level is high here in [my city]. We are in the last redoubt of Christendom here. We have huge mega-churches and pastors are still important public figures here. They have the ear of the city council and they are on the news. But the anxiety is still here. When who we really are gets exposed...we're very slow to let go of that but we are not the same city. That's why the dialogue thing is critically important in the community.<sup>50</sup>

R.'s discursive movement to including literary expressions of social dissonance related to religious difference is both a fluent demonstration of metaphor and an example of the

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<sup>48</sup> Taggart and Wilson, *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers*, 169.

<sup>49</sup> This researcher has a background in Victorian literature; she connected anxiety about perceived social changes in the Victorian period to R.'s descriptions of what he sees in his students. In agreement, the two poems he offered as illustrative are Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" and William Butler Yeats's "The Second Coming."

<sup>50</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

way depicting dissonance in inter-religious classrooms can be helped by using figurative language or imaginative examples. Indeed, the very thrust of “The Sea of Faith” deals with the speaker’s recognition of the “eternal note of sadness” brought by understanding that faith is no more. Arnold writes:

*The Sea of Faith*<sup>51</sup>  
*Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore*  
*Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.*

*...for the world...*  
*Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,*  
*Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;*  
*And we are here as on a darkling plain*  
*Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,*  
*Where ignorant armies clash by night.*

The work of the research participants in this study indicates that even without “certitude,” there might well still be peace.

As it turns out, part of reflective practice that has been picked up by all those after Schön, from middle school coaches to Chinese language school directors, is the ability to turn one’s mind to the problem with creativity. Schön calls it naming and framing; he writes,

When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the ‘things’ of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and in what directions the situation needs to be changed. Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we *name* the things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> R. misremembered the title of the poem, calling it “The Sea of Faith” in his interview; this accidental retitling reveals his understanding of what the poem is about and why it might apply to the dissonance experienced by his students and program participants.

<sup>52</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 40. Emphasis original.

We note that “problem setting” is an inherently interactive process, according to Schön. This quality may be why so many professionals in the caring professions and those which fall into the category of what might be called “human endeavors” (teaching, working with the very young or very old, coaching, facilitating, developing strategies for dialogue and peace-making) have adopted and adapted Schön’s initial premises. By the 1990s, teacher educator programs had successfully incorporated the notion of “reflective practitioner” to describe masterful teachers who used reflective practice artfully and consistently. The concept of “reflective practice,” has included, over the years, ideas including “reflective thinking,” “critically reflective practice,” “critical thinking,” and “critical reflection.”

In both setting a problem and in holding an idea apart to allow the light of reflection to shine upon it, casting lantern shadows of new understanding, the use of metaphor or copulas is necessary and allows for a flexibility of mind that, with practice, enables the thinker to encounter increasingly different contexts with curiosity, not paralysis. In *Principles of Instrumental Logic*, John Dewey uses the linguistic term copula<sup>53</sup> to help readers imagine this process. Dewey was a philosopher, logician, and educator; Schön was writing not for educators but for professionals looking to become more open, flexible, and virtuosic in their processes. So, while the latter spoke of metaphors as a way to help us describe the way we think about puzzles, Dewey is attempting to elucidate the very thought processes as we think about them. For this reason, Dewey’s writing also creates a kind of primer on reflective thought that we will

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<sup>53</sup> Copula is the linguistic term for linking verb, and can be seen in the sentence “The bridge is over the river;” a copula links the subject from the predicate. In Dewey’s use, a copula is itself a bridge, linking a known concept to an unknown one for long enough for us to become comfortable with it—to incorporate it into our experience.

find useful not only as we consider reflective practice *à la* Schön, but also as we reimagine it as an essential ingredient in inter-religious education.

Dewey begins his discussion of the use of the copula in perception, and in encountering the new, by writing,

On the side of the subject [of judging something new in reality] the same difficulty appears. The whale is real. It meets us in perception. But when we examine the subject it is at the mercy of the same judgment. There was a time when 'whale' was only 'this.' By a long series of investigations and judgments it has become real. By condensation of knowledge the whale is taken as given but is a concept, a former judgment, 'This is a whale.' The subject is always a union of previous predicates, abstractions. Then the function of the copula being to assert reality, both subject and predicate appear to be abstractions. One abstraction is asserted of the other.<sup>54</sup>

We can imagine a teacher early in her practice, having firmly in mind how she intends to address students who refuse to look her in the eye when she is disciplining them. Then, she learns that different cultures have different ways of understanding looking in the eyes of those in authority. Her thought process might unfold in the following way: "This [looking at me in the eye] is respect. Looking at my feet while I am speaking is disrespect." But (to quote Dewey) " 'By a long series of investigations,' I know now that looking at my feet is also respect." At an early point, "respect shown by looking at feet" was an unknown, and then an abstraction. By use of copula, the abstraction became visible as part of [a new] reality. Then, with practice (now leaving the realm of imagination into actual trial and error in reality), the teacher is able to recognize respect shown in more than one way.

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<sup>54</sup> John Dewey, *Principles of Instrumental Logic: John Dewey's Lectures in Ethics and Political Ethics, 1895-1896*, ed. Donald F. Koch. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 36.

K. is a scholar and professor of Biblical interpretation; he teaches at a Protestant theological school. When he considers how his students demonstrate acuity in working with multiple perspectives, his examples echo processes Dewey describes. K. asks his students to read new texts both as a way to encounter the other, and as practice encountering the texts themselves from alternate perspectives. K. described what he intends for his students to do in their textual analysis, noting,

in this case, it's to use the literary text as a different way of approaching the other. But since 95% of our students are going to be Christian, 'the other' means within the context, looking at where our canonical texts arose. Most Christian ministers will, in a sense, preach about some kind of the uniqueness or the particularity of either the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament, within their context.

Here, we're forcing them to recognize that within the areas of the formation of these Canonical texts, there were people with different views that were just as good and just as important as the ones that formed Christianity. And so, our belief is that encounter with the other or with [texts] contemporary with the canonical text, is an important way for them to develop a *different* religious orientation to the other in the contemporary world.<sup>55</sup>

We can imagine a series of investigations for K.'s students involving reading, connecting material to existing schema, re-reading, encountering alterity, and beginning to process ways of moving from abstract understandings of different religious orientations to new, fuller realities that include different contexts. K.'s teaching also reminds us that dialogical work may also be text based and include research and writing—many interfaith practitioners consider experiential, service, and immersion learning to be key characteristics of inter-religious education, but we see here that engaging difference in

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<sup>55</sup> K., in discussion with the author, November 5, 2014.

texts—even ancient texts—can also provide impetus for the kind of transformation inter-religious education seeks.

Dewey notes, “The significance of judgment is in the *process* of judgment, not in its completion. When judgment is completed there is no judgment, but a certain value.”<sup>56</sup> That is, when we are judging (figuring out how to categorize something new, and how to incorporate it into our practice), it is that very work that is valuable, and that leads to our growth as practitioners. We should not despair that we will not know how to handle every challenge, or bemoan the sheer volume of new ideas or puzzles we encounter, but instead focus on growing in our metaphorical abilities so we can meet difference with openness, quickness of comparison, and alacrity in entering the process. In the next section, an investigation into narrative pedagogies will build upon our understanding of the importance of metaphorical thinking. This metaphor “build upon” is itself Dewian; Dewey writes,

The percept is never the complete reality, but is simply setting before the mind certain material to be used. The concept is the way of grasping the material. The copula is the complete reality. The judgment may give new fact (realization) or it may give new truth to modify other things (symbolization). The predicate is not a form, is not static in the sense of a skeleton or mold, but is active like an architect’s plan. It is dynamic as opposed to static.<sup>57</sup>

As we shall see, in religious and inter-religious education, students and participants frequently encounter “new truth” and static, unfolding aspects of [an ever-incomplete] reality. Copulas and metaphors give us moving frames upon which to hang new material as we make sense of it.

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<sup>56</sup> Dewey, *Principles of Instrumental Logic*, 44. Emphasis this researcher’s.

<sup>57</sup> Dewey, *Principles of Instrumental Logic*, 45.

## Middle: Narrative Pedagogies, Religion as Resource

### *Narrative Pedagogy in Christian Religious Education*

In *Finding God in the Graffiti: Empowering Teenagers Through Stories*, practical theologian and religious and inter-religious educator Frank Rogers, Jr. links story creation, story sharing, and story hearing to the transmission of faith traditions, the development of one's sense of self, the mediation of experience of the sacred, the nurturing of a critical consciousness, the emboldening of the artist within each person, and the kindling of social transformation. In all of Rogers's conclusions we see the importance of cultivating story for reflective practice, and especially in his consideration of stories and critical consciousness development. In addition, because one purpose of this study is to examine how reflective practice might better foster inter-religious encounter, we shall also attend to the power of story as it relates to shepherding us through the shaky places of dissonance and difference.

In Rogers's title for the fourth chapter of his book, he asks, "How do stories nurture a critical consciousness?" He writes,

In the same way that narrative is the primary form through which individuals make meaning of their experience, communities and cultures interpret events through the lenses of their formative narratives. We may quest for true love, the American dream, the kin-dom of God, the blessing of Allah, global democracy, or multinational capitalistic domination, depending on the cultural narratives that shape us. Other people, communities, and cultures are interpreted as allies or enemies to the extent to which they promote or threaten such quests. How we engage those who threaten our pursuits, our 'enemies' as it were, is also shaped by narrative.

Stories form us toward either violent or nonviolent engagement with such people.<sup>58</sup>

The work of inter-religious educators explicitly involves facilitating encounters with and learning about “other people, communities, and cultures;” how we interpret alterity can mean the difference between violent, fear-based responses and relationships that support lasting educational and peaceful endeavors. Rogers notices, in his teaching practice, that narrative can claim and reclaim all of this—perhaps, he considers, creating opportunities explicitly designed to build narrative capacity in learners will help them find their voices/vocations, share their perspectives in rich and enriching ways, and build community with justice and care. Rogers’s work is resonant and flexible enough to be used by disparate and heterogeneous communities; although he personally identifies as a Christian, this personal context does not limit the recommendations of his work.

However, Christian religious educators often connect storytelling with the “capital S Story” of the entrance of God into the human world through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The prevalence of the stories of Narnia, and their impact on generations of Christians, is one example—their author, C. S. Lewis, was a professor of literature, not a theologian, but his work with stories transcended popular culture and writing to make a lasting impression on Christian ministers and religious educators.

In *The God-Hungry Imagination*, Sarah Arthur tracks the history of writers of fiction and how story and imagination can be used to develop spirituality in young Christians. Arthur differs from Rogers in that her recommendations for religious education are only suitable for other Christians—her practice in narrative pedagogy

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<sup>58</sup> Frank Rogers, Jr., *Finding God in the Graffiti: Empowering Teenagers through Stories* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2011), 99.



doesn't transfer easily into inter-religious spaces. When she wrote the book, Arthur was a young minister and divinity school student; her position as practitioner, working in a congregational context, allows us a glimpse of how sometimes it is authors, not formal theologians, who nurture the hearts in the pews. This is important for this study because we seek to understand which capacities are fostered and ought to be fostered by and in inter-religious education; this study posits that reflective practice, deliberately nurtured by reflection via narrative, is one possible way.

Christian religious educators have as primary example the Story of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Dorothy Sayers, fiction writer, playwright, and essayist, discusses this double-edged possibility (story and Story) in her introduction to *The Man Born to Be King: A Play-Cycle on the Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. Sayers notes the connection for her, as a Christian playwright telling "the" Christian story (yet in a drama), to the nature of the gospel story. Sayers writes,

My object was *to tell that story* to the best of my ability, within the medium at my disposal—in short to make as good a work of art as I could. For a work of art that is not good and true *in art* is not good or true in any other respect, and is useless for any purpose whatsoever—even for edification—because it is a lie, and the devil is the father of all such. As drama, these plays stand or fall. The idea that religious plays are not to be judged by the proper standard of drama derives from a narrow and lopsided theology which will not allow that all truth—including the artist's truth—is in Christ, but persists in excluding the Lord of Truth from His own dominions.<sup>59</sup>

Sayers exemplifies the connection many Christian religious educators see between practicing storytelling and story hearing with preparedness to practice reflection that can

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<sup>59</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Man Born to Be King: A Play-Cycle on the Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 14. Emphasis original.

foster transformation. Arthur also includes the work of Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers, and Flannery O'Connor<sup>60</sup> as experts on how story pierces reality and touches readers and listeners in a spiritual place. These writers are connecting a posture of curiosity with a movement into transformation. For the purposes of this review of the literature, and for this study in inter-religious education, it is important to note that the aims of some Christian religious educators are not the same as the aims of inter-religious educators, although both may share the use of narrative pedagogy and reflection.

Notice that Arthur, in her work, identifies concerns of Christian ministers and educators even as she identifies how the metanarrative of the Christian story can answer that concern. Arthur writes, "I believe there's more going on, and the evidence is nothing less than the slow exodus of youth and their families from Sunday morning worship over the past few decades, no matter what new bells and whistles the church employs,"<sup>61</sup> and

[We are experiencing the] loss of the communal story or 'metanarrative'...Historically we've believed that our world's story is one that the God of scripture is telling, with a coherent beginning, middle, and end...we can no longer assume that post-moderns in the pews believe they inhabit a 'narratable world.'<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> These fiction writers are sometimes known by Christian fans to be Christian, but, especially in the cases of Tolkien, Sayers, and O'Connor, their work is rarely overtly Christian or even religious. Arthur's point is that storytelling and story consumption have the power to awaken reflective practice in us, which can lead to spiritual growth and transformation. For our purposes, we are tracking how Christian religious educators use narrative pedagogy for religious education. Later, we will make the link from this to the possibilities of using reflective practice, via narrative pedagogy, for inter-religious education.

<sup>61</sup> Sarah Arthur, *The God-Hungry Imagination: The Art of Storytelling for Postmodern Youth Ministry* (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 2007), 23.

<sup>62</sup> Arthur, *The God-Hungry Imagination*, 25.

Arthurs sees the power of storytelling as a balm to heal postmodern young people and bring them back into the church. Her book models the use of narrative pedagogy for her peers—similar ministers who decry losing youth and seek both to help them find transformation and keep them in the pews. Unfortunately, their second point is neither necessary nor helpful for inter-religious educators or practitioners. In fact, if we follow Arthur's recommendations too closely, we end up with an exclusivity that truncates possibilities for dialogue and relationship with alterity. For example, Arthur shares an account of a young Japanese man who watched the movie adaptation of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and then experienced personal [Christian] salvation at a Billy Graham revival. Arthur recognizes the transformative potential of Tolkien's work, but makes a move that no inter-religious education would find palatable. She writes,

Whoa. For youth workers who are generally in favor of telling kids the truth straight up, this sounds like a near miss. What if he'd gotten his hands on *His Dark Materials* by the decidedly anti-Christian Philip Pullman instead?<sup>63</sup> Or what if Billy Graham hadn't come to Tokyo? The guy could still be praying to El Whoever and wandering in a spiritual fog.<sup>64</sup>

Here we see the tension of Arthur's allegiance to one faith tradition—she is correct that stories have the power to draw Christian reflection in Christians, but hopes that the reflection and ensuing growth and development will remain [only] Christian. Similarly, Garrett Green writes, in his *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination*,

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<sup>63</sup> In fact, Pullman's metaphor of "dust" from *His Dark Materials* can be used to help North American Christian students understand the material karmic concept of *pudgal* that makes up the more complicated aspects of Jain cosmology.

<sup>64</sup> Arthur, *The God-Hungry Imagination*, 38.

“Imagination is the anthropological point of contact for divine revelation.”<sup>65</sup> Might we also be able to say, “imagination is the anthropological point of contact for *human* revelation?” This study argues that exact point, and examines current inter-religious teaching and learning practices to discover whether or not this might be true.

End: Why this research, and why now

*Resilience, Reflective Practice via Narrative Pedagogy, and Resources for Inter-Religious Education*

This literature review has examined the contours of three separate fields, including: reflective practice from the work of educator and philosopher John Dewey and professional practice expert Donald Schön, resilience from developmental psychology, psychology, and then education, and narrative pedagogy as it is used by Christian religious educators. Both Chapter 3, on reflective practice, and Chapter 4, on resilience, provide more detailed examination of pertinent literature. Reflective practice was chosen as a potential capacity for study because it is related to how we think, and how we think about how we learn. In addition, Christian religious education teaches us that a narrative imagination—often evoked in reflective practice—can foster transformative learning; this study examines whether or not reflective practice might positively impact inter-religious learning. Resilience was chosen as a potential capacity for study because if dissonance is part of all learning, and inter-religious encounter particularly; to that end, helping students and participants learn to withstand those moments of disruption will make inter-religious learning more sustainable and perhaps richer. The two may be connected; this study explores whether reflective practice builds or supports resilience. We have noted

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<sup>65</sup> Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 43.

where exemplary researchers and practitioners in the fields of resilience, reflective practice, and religious education have come so far, how their ideas might apply to the project at hand, and what work we will ask of our research as we connect these queries and make recommendations for inter-religious education specifically.

It behooves us to remember that inter-religious education itself is a field situated at crossroads of disciplines. We must add to that a flexibility of posture buttressed by careful attention to the necessary details from each field, and similar care in application. Later chapters on applications and recommendations will include summaries of these reminders, as well as the working definitions that emerged from the body of research.

### Chapter 3: Exploring Reflective Practice as a Capacity for Inter-Religious Learning

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the history and lineage of reflective practice as well as its current applications. It includes analysis of current teaching of reflective practice and asks: Why are teachers taught reflective practice and not students? In addition, practices from religious education that foster reflective practice are explored and are mapped over onto potential inter-religious education practices. Finally, this chapter explores whether and how reflective practice is essential to inter-religious learning and how inter-religious educators might access and foster this capacity for their students and communities.

For this research project, we find foundational the work of John Dewey and Jean Piaget (for reflective thinking generally) and then Donald Schön, Chris Argyris, Anthony Clark, Robert Yinger, John Loughran, James Johnston, and Graham Badley. In the late 1970s, Donald Schön and Chris Argyris drew upon the work of Piaget and Dewey to build the idea of a “reflective practitioner” who practiced life-long learning. The field of reflective practice has been greatly enriched by teacher education programs; indeed, a scan of the field reveals that there are many more resources helping *teachers* become reflective than there is research about how reflective practice might benefit students.

One can also find concepts and models of reflective practice from the fields of nursing and healthcare, including the work of Stephan Brookfield, Barbara Carper, Christopher Johns, and Graham Gibbs. This study tracks the development of the concept of “reflective practice,” including earlier ideas including “reflective thinking,” “critically reflective practice,” “critical thinking,” and “critical reflection.” In particular, this study

seeks to attend to how the concept of reflective practice has moved from being a capacity practiced by professionals to being a capacity that can be taught to students and participants. Specifically, the argument of this research makes the move from articulating reflective practice as something leaders, teachers, or facilitators do to something participants and students understand, learn, and practice.

The voices of religious educators who speak to identity formation, including Sharon Parks and Mary Elizabeth Moore, are also valuable, as is Karen Marie Yust's work on spiritual formation for youth. In later chapters, recommendations for incorporating reflective practice in inter-religious education will also draw from theologians and religious educators who have begun to explore and document best practices in inter-religious education; these include: Catherine Cornille, Francis X. Clooney, Paul Knitter, Mary Boys, Sara Lee, and Judith Berling. Finally, religious educators—especially those engaged in narrative pedagogies and developmental psychologists round out this review; these voices include Frank Rogers, Susan Shaw, Jean Piaget, and James Fowler. For example, Frank Rogers and Susan Shaw both encourage reflective practices as a means to more deeply engage narrative.

#### Reflective Practice: From Schön's Professionals to Transformative Classrooms

Donald Schön's 1983 *The Reflective Practitioner* explores how professionals can think about their thinking so that their problem-solving might be most artful and benefit from ongoing reflection. For Schön, professionals include managers, architects, and therapists, to name a few. Their problems are the stuff of everyday work: how to design a school where classrooms are both functional and inspirational, or how to help a young

resident psychiatrist support his patient. Schön notes that professionals must be able to balance their goals with various unknowns that arise moment by moment. Dealing with uncertainty and being able to “puzzle” through work situations enable professionals to do their jobs well.

Schön introduces his definition of “puzzling” as he describes the artfulness with which professionals must engage in their work; he writes,

Usually reflection on knowing-in-action goes together with reflection on the stuff at hand. There is some puzzling, or troubling, or interesting phenomenon with which the individual is trying to deal. As he tries to make sense of it, he also reflects on the understandings which have been implicit in his action, understandings which he surfaces, restructures, and embodies in further action. It is this entire process of reflection-in-action which is central to the ‘art’ by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict.<sup>66</sup>

Here he also introduces the verb “knowing-in-action,” which includes both the concept and points to a kind of reflection that later scholars pick up and include in various curricula and training materials. We note that Schön identifies a sequence of responses from the individual as he is presented with the “stuff at hand.” First, she is troubled—the new information or encounter disrupts current practice. Next, in attempting to understand, she reflects on his current action, previous actions, and what she might do next. She draws upon prior experience and knowledge to create a schema that will allow her to deal with the new.

Schön draws upon both John Dewey and Jean Piaget to construct the reflection process. Piaget’s theory of disequilibrium is echoed in the “troubling...phenomenon” that leads to a shift in thinking and action. In Dewey’s *Logic: Theory of Inquiry*, Dewey

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<sup>66</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 50.



discusses how “situations of indeterminacy”<sup>67</sup> create anxiety, leading us to reflect upon them and seek to make meaning. Schön takes Dewey’s and Piaget’s attention to how the learner responds to the unknown a step further, positing that when we *consider* how we are responding to the problem, we are participating in solving it. It is the process of reflection itself that leads to successful practice. Schön writes,

When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the ‘things’ of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and in what directions the situation needs to be changed. Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we *name* the things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them.<sup>68</sup>

Active reflection upon the problem—just after one notices the disruption—includes naming and [re-]framing it to create a container that will allow one to puzzle through it successfully.

According to Schön, professionals grow in their ability to do this; Schön likens the skill of entering zones of puzzling to the work of an artist. Indeed, he declares, “It is this entire process of reflection-in-action which is central to the ‘art’ by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict.”<sup>69</sup> While “often we cannot say what it is that we know,”<sup>70</sup> participation in the process of disruption, unknowing, knowing that one doesn’t know,

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<sup>67</sup> John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1938).

<sup>68</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 40.

<sup>69</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 50.

<sup>70</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 49.

and then artful comparison to past experiences in search of similarities, into invention of a new response—this is reflection-in-action.

Currently, reflective practice has been used as a primary source for education and professional development in three disparate fields; these include: teacher training, nursing, and writing center facilitators working in higher education. Inter-religious educators can learn from all three of these groups; each uses key concepts of reflective practice as well as adds content and methods unique to each audience. For example, writing center instructors and coaches hope to foster meta-cognition about the writing process in their students. Students who do not understand themselves to be good writers often do not use methods of self-talk, mental practice, or reflection about their writing processes. Writing center coaches include direct instruction and modeling about reflection-in-action both in their work with students and in their own professional development programs.

Reflection-in-action was used by teacher educators in both reflective practice and in action research; both fields and ways of teaching utilize Schön's original context to help pre-service and novice teachers develop the ongoing, continuous practice of reflection-in-action in their teaching and in their personal professional development. Interestingly, Schön never uses an educator for one of his examples; he is grounded in his own context thinking about how organizations develop and are managed. However, his fingerprints are all over later work by and for educators.

## Current Applications of Reflective Practice

By 2005, former teachers and teacher educators Germaine L. Taggart and Alfred P. Wilson had created a handbook for teachers and teacher trainers that exemplifies the absorption of Schön's philosophy into education. In their *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers: 50 Action Strategies*, Taggart and Wilson name dozens of attributes that identify a teacher as a "reflective practitioner." They write,

Reflective practitioners: identify and analyze problems and situations, look at problems relative to educational, social, and ethical issues, critically consider contextual and pedagogical factors, use a rational problem-solving approach, make intuitive, creative interpretations and judgments, are metacognitively, analytically, and instructionally skillful, possess self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and a desire for lifelong learning, are open to experimentation and new innovations, experience job satisfaction, make decisions consciously and carefully, view situations from multiple perspectives, set personal short-term and long-term goals, plan and monitor actions, then evaluate results of those actions, have essential skills for attaining and using information, correct understandings of underlying facts, procedures, and skills, consider general characteristics of so-called best practice, are flexible in a search for alternative explanations, use evidence in supporting or evaluating a decision or position, have a commitment to values (e.g., all students can learn), have a strong commitment to systematic and rational reflective thinking, show responsiveness to educational needs of students, question personal aims and actions, constantly review instructional goals, methods, and materials, are a proactive force in education, are intellectually perceptive to multiple and novel ideas, are committed to problem resolution (wholeheartedness), commit adequate resources to reflective thinking (time as well as physical, mental, and emotional energy), welcome peer review, critique, and advice, write (journal) events reflectively.<sup>71</sup>

Here we have enough competencies and capacities to create an entire curriculum and assessment model for pre-service teachers. We notice that aspects from Schön, such as encountering the disruption with a positive attitude, seeking to connect prior experiences

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<sup>71</sup> Taggart and Wilson, *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers*, 38.

and ideas, willingness to try new ideas, and participating in ongoing reflection, are embedded throughout Taggart's and Wilson's identifying features. In addition, Taggart and Wilson deliberately include time, space, and resources for one to reflect. They are, in a way, seeking to systematize (and even, given their packaging of the book for teacher education programs, institutionalize) reflective practice for teachers.

Reflective practice can be taught in a multitude of ways. Specifically, Taggart and Wilson recommend journaling, storytelling, study circles, and "microteaching" as practices that foster reflection. We shall return to these concepts in detail below. It is important to note that Taggart and Wilson (like many of their peers) seek to *assess* reflective thinking, which is also an extension of Schön's original intentions. They write, "The benefits of reflective thinking are great. But how do you know where an individual functions as a reflective practitioner? How can you establish a baseline so that growth in reflection can be assessed? What constitutes evidence of reflection?"<sup>72</sup> These very questions indicate the importance of reflective practice in teacher preparation programs—the attention to assessment (and replicability) points to the value of reflective practice in teaching communities.

While Taggart and Wilson have designed their reflective practice fostering ideas for teachers; clearly, they can be adapted for teachers to use with students. In later chapters where we discuss applications of the findings of this research, we will explore possible adaptations more fully. Journaling is used widely in classrooms for a variety of reasons. For reflective practice specifically, they allow teachers to interact directly with students and students' thinking about their thinking. Storytelling develops a student's

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<sup>72</sup> Taggart and Wilson, *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers*, 33.

ability to both frame and re-frame their own experiences, as well as develop a posture of listening which can lead to perspective taking practice. Both of these skills are aspects of reflective practice. Study circles allow for consistent relationship-building, which can create a safe container for encountering new or disruptive ideas and reflecting upon them. Within study circles, students can also try out solutions to common puzzles, and make use of multiple points of view. Even microteaching can be practiced by students and participants in interfaith engagement. Taggart and Wilson describe mini lessons, in which novice teachers first practice using a new method or technique with peers. This allows them to try out new ideas, and to make themselves vulnerable among peers before taking the plunge with students. We can also imagine university students in an inter-religious context, for example, using the model of “mini lessons” to practice facilitating dialogue among stakeholders in their own communities, to practice giving a sermon or speech that draws upon comparative theologies, or working to solve a case study. Microteaching includes a debriefing component where peers can ask questions and the facilitator can reflect upon her own experience in the moment, with peers who help her understand and process the experience.

In *Curriculum Action Research: A Handbook of Methods and Resources for the Reflective Practitioner*, James McKernan extends the concept of reflective practice and applies it to a form of research. That is, he posits, “the unifying theme is that all action research is a form of *reflective inquiry* governed by rigorous principles, or canons of procedure.”<sup>73</sup> Like Schön, McKernan also likens the practice of reflective action to “the

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<sup>73</sup> James McKernan, *Curriculum Action Research: A Handbook of Methods and Resources for the Reflective Practitioner* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 31.

skills of the graffiti artist, dancer and composer”<sup>74</sup> that are developed through inquiry and experience. For McKernan, the entire point of inquiry is understanding, which can lead to action towards improvement.<sup>75</sup> Teachers are in a unique position because their daily practice—fraught with minor disequilibriums and disruptions, even positive—is ripe for reflection-in-action. If systematized, reflective practice can develop into a form of inquiry that leads to original research—this can then be applied back into teaching practice. Just as Taggart and Wilson suggest that good teaching ought always include explicit reflection, McKernan holds that good research by teachers might be buttressed by ongoing reflective practice. Again, McKernan, like Taggart and Wilson, presupposes that good teaching includes reflection—he is extending this capacity that teachers already have into a form of action research that teachers can use to better their pedagogical practice.

McKernan echoes Schön’s appreciation of the problems that provoke questions; he writes,

...teaching that is not a knowledge-bounded set of competencies which are learned during student teaching, but on the contrary teaching that reflectively supports teacher growth and professionalism through the questioning of policies, problems and the consequences of actions.<sup>76</sup>

And so, from Schön to teachers and teacher educators such as McKernan, we understand the movement from professionals in general reflecting upon their practice in order to

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<sup>74</sup> McKernan, *Curriculum Action Research*, 49.

<sup>75</sup> This notion of “improvement,” with an embedded idea of “growth” connects with our notion that inter-religious education must have as one aim change, transformation, or growth for individuals and communities.

<sup>76</sup> McKernan, *Curriculum Action Research*, 46.

become more artfully responsive, to the application of reflective practice specifically for teachers. This dissertation posits that reflective practice ought not to be for teachers alone, but also for students. In addition, those learners in inter-religious settings are in a unique position: they are in settings that provoke feelings of dissonance, so can benefit from the application of reflective practice, and their inter-religious engagement gives them rich impetus for reflection.

#### Analysis of Reflective Practice in Teaching: The Cobbler's Children Have No Shoes

In the late 1970s, Donald Schön and Chris Argyris drew upon the work of Piaget and Dewey to build the idea of a “reflective practitioner” who practiced life-long learning. The field of reflective practice has been greatly enriched by teacher education programs; indeed, a scan of the field reveals that there are many more resources helping *teachers* become reflective than there is research about how reflective practice might benefit students.

The concept of “reflective practice,” has included, over the years, ideas including “reflective thinking,” “critically reflective practice,” “critical thinking,” and “critical reflection.” If this capacity can be taught and practiced by professionals, why can it not be taught and practiced by students?

For example, in the field of religious education, both Frank Rogers and Susan Shaw both encourage reflective practices as a means to more deeply engage narrative. In *Finding God in the Graffiti*, Rogers connects the transformative potential of story-sharing and story-hearing with more contemplative practices; he writes, “...narrative pedagogies can teach for *contemplative encounter*. Recognizing that some narrative texts have the

power to mediate the presence of God, these pedagogies cultivate a profound indwelling of a story in the hope of experiencing the sacred reality embedded within it.”<sup>77</sup> For religious educators, storytelling and story creation are rich mines from which reflective practice might emerge. Indeed, Schön’s initial “trying to make sense of [the problem]” that leads one to access prior experiences is itself a narrative act. Shaw notes, “...empirical research suggests that retrieval is actually a matter of reconstruction.”<sup>78</sup> That is, we are not merely remembering something, we are reconstructing a story about that prior experiencing and telling it to ourselves. Just as reflection-in-action is a practice that can become a deeper and richer capacity over time, so are story-creating and story-sharing practices that lead to greater aptitude for reflection.

Narrative pedagogy closely informs reflective practice for two additional reasons. First, story telling is a “process of self-creation and meaning making that is an important condition of learning.”<sup>79</sup> The fact that it is a process is important—just as Schön’s professionals encountered a disruption, cast back for related experiences, created a schema with which to address the puzzle, and artfully responded in the moment, the construction of a story includes casting back for experiences or prior knowledge, recognizing or constructing a schema for the new story, and sharing it responsively in the moment in a way that is accessible to the audience. Second, as Shaw points out, this process is a condition for learning, just as reflection-in-action (drawn from Dewey and

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<sup>77</sup> Rogers, Jr., *Finding God in the Graffiti*, 18.

<sup>78</sup> Susan M. Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1999), 24.

<sup>79</sup> Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education*, 4.



Piaget) precedes learning. In addition, critical thinking is frequently held up by educators as an essential skill; reflection allows this capacity to develop, and allows it practice.

It may seem strange to connect something as artistic and ineffable as storytelling with reflective practice, given that the latter had its birth in a context most pragmatic. However, when we examine how storytelling and narrative thinking effect the learner, we will see that storytelling and reflective practice dovetail nicely. For example, in “Passing Over: A Model for the Use of Storytelling with Adults in Religious Education Based Upon the Hermeneutic Approach of John S. Dunne,” Michael Edward Williams makes an observation about narrative thinking that hearkens directly to Schön’s artfulness and McKernan’s comparisons to artists. He writes, “Propositional thinking is logical, analytical, and abstract. Narrative thinking, in contrast, is imaginative, intuitive, and concrete.”<sup>80</sup> While propositional thinking certainly has its place, spaces of great dissonance (for example, inter-religious encounters) call for imagination, flexibility, and use of metaphor to nimbly create new schema and allow participants to move past the puzzle and into learning.

In her *Bridging Troubled Waters: Conflict Resolution from the Heart*, Michelle LeBaron describes both the power of metaphor and the varied ways educators and peacemakers can use metaphor as a tool, including enhancing communication and relationship, opening yet-unseen spaces of new possibilities in old conflicts, clarifying viewpoints, and connecting participants. LeBaron reminds us, “[Metaphors] help make

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<sup>80</sup> Michael Edward Williams, “Passing Over: A Model for the Use of Storytelling with Adults in Religious Education Based upon the Hermeneutic Approach of John S. Dunne” (PhD diss., Northwestern University), 1983, 98.

explicit what are otherwise hidden: assumptions, perceptions, judgments, and worldviews.”<sup>81</sup> Inter-religious education is not necessarily conflict-ridden for its participants, but many of us bring into educational settings limiting or limited frameworks that create “limiting assumptions, inhibitions, and emotional judgments.”<sup>82</sup> As LeBaron puts it, “When we encounter mystery (and conflict<sup>83</sup> is often mysterious, tangled as it is in relational, personal, and cultural dynamics), we seek to understand it.”<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, in inter-religious encounters, what one knows about the world comes into contrast with previously unknown; alterity creates such dissonance that many participants either retreat into non-participation or avoid dialogue. And yet, these are ripe opportunities for growth. As Williams puts it, “Cognitive development occurs as ideas or assumptions come into conflict, making simplistic answers no longer viable.”<sup>85</sup> Many of us have experienced this as our worlds widened to include relationships and encounters with those dissimilar from us. If Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Light, what of our neighbor who practices *Dhigambra* Jainism? One task of inter-religious education is to facilitate encounters and relationships in ways that allow participants to move past a craving for simplistic answers and to sit in a place of provisional, flexible, or imagined

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<sup>81</sup> Michelle LeBaron, *Bridging Troubled Waters: Conflict Resolution from the Heart* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 184.

<sup>82</sup> LeBaron, *Bridging Troubled Waters*, 188.

<sup>83</sup> One might also say, “and inter-religious encounter is often mysterious...”

<sup>84</sup> LeBaron, *Bridging Troubled Waters*, 188.

<sup>85</sup> Williams, “Passing Over: A Model for the Use of Storytelling with Adults in Religious Education,” 62.

possibilities. Williams reminds us, “Learners who are able to see commonality in disparate characters and situations may come to accept differences as not only tolerable but also positive.”<sup>86</sup> Is this not one aim of inter-religious programming and education—to help participants accept differences as positive and affirming?

And so, if we are to understand which capacities inter-religious education ought to foster, it behooves us to explore which practices help students best engage with alterity and how to foster students’ capacities in them. Inter-religious encounter ought to be a place in which participants can practice the best, most imaginative and most fruitful versions of human development. Storytelling can be a palatable practice that can scaffold places of reflection, creation of new schema, and the creation of new answers to old puzzles. Inter-religious engagement can foster a multiplicity of stories—leading to rich reflective practice and an increased posture of openness. As Williams notes, “The more stories, the more standpoints. The more standpoints, the truer to the complexities of human experience.”<sup>87</sup> The wealth of resources teachers have for practicing ongoing reflection-in-action speaks to their understanding of the value of “more stories, more standpoints.” The natural next step would be to apply this notion into fostering this understanding for students—indeed, their stories and standpoints are ready to be shared.

Reflective practice is difficult to measure. In today’s climate of accountability, more immeasurable subjects and capacities get less attention. In addition, many teachers

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<sup>86</sup> Williams, “Passing Over: A Model for the Use of Storytelling with Adults in Religious Education,” 62.

<sup>87</sup> Williams, “Passing Over: A Model for the Use of Storytelling with Adults in Religious Education,” 103.

consider themselves content area experts, and see themselves as teachers of, for example, Theravada Buddhism or exegetical tools, and not teachers of young adults. If this is the mindset, it is not difficult to imagine that some teachers would feel drawn to subject area content, and not more holistic capacities that help students achieve better learning in all areas. And yet, experienced educators understand that practices that support the entire learner will also impact her understanding of the content material. A focus on assessment and content may account for why teachers have access to materials supporting reflective practice and students do not, but it seems natural that teachers as experts in reflective practice can model and share their experiences in this practice with their students.

Health care professionals, particularly nurses and nurse educators, have also continued Schön's work in cultivating critically reflective habits in health care providers. Their work both provides an understanding of how reflective practice manifests in a particular field, and provides us with ideas to carry into inter-religious education. In the 1980s and 1990s, Stephen Brookfield deliberately adapted Schön's ideas, as well as Dewey's, to create pedagogical models for health care professionals. In "Critically Reflective Practice," published in the *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Profession*, he recommends the following four "lenses" to facilitate reflective practice; these include: autobiography as learner, "learners' eyes," "our colleagues' experiences," and theoretical literature. (For the use of the last, Brookfield points out, "...theory can help us 'name' our practice by illuminating the general elements of what we think are idiosyncratic experiences.")<sup>88</sup> Brookfield intends these lenses to "[alert] us to distorted or

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<sup>88</sup> Stephen Brookfield, "Critically Reflective Practice," *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Profession* 18, no. 4 (1998): 197.

incomplete aspects of our assumptions that need further investigation.”<sup>89</sup> We notice that unlike Schön or McKernan, Brookfield doesn’t wait for participants to encounter a puzzle and cognitively reach for the process to solution; he sets forth the lenses as a model to be taught from the outset, so that participants might have tools already in hand when they encounter their first disruptions.

Note that the first three lenses encompass aspects of storytelling: investigating through the lenses of our own autobiographies requires us to begin with Shaw’s retrieval and reconstruction process—and using story as a model onto which one might frame experience and understanding. For example, in an inter-religious setting, one task for participants might include the following: think of a time when you wondered about what happens after death. Instead of beginning with a dialogue between adherents of different religious and ethical traditions *about* the afterlife, participants are given a chance to consider their viewpoint from the place of story, their own stories. This posture of storytelling can keep curiosity and wonder in the space longer, and can forestall judgment and too-early conclusions.

Cultivating one’s “learner’s eyes” means to practice a flexible posture of learning, to cede—for short periods of time—one’s position as expert in hopes of coming at a dilemma from an unexpected perspective. One might think that all students—whether pre-service teachers, nursing students, or students in an interfaith studies course—are naturally using learners’ eyes, we must also remember that this is a practice, and all of us find ourselves more or less adept at it, and more or less aware of our status as learners, depending on how safe we feel, the degree of relationship we have with our classmates,

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<sup>89</sup> Brookfield, “Critically Reflective Practice,” 197.

whether or not our beliefs are threatened, and what our aims are for participating in the class. While it feels good to be an expert at something, it can induce vulnerability to maintain learners' eyes. One role of educators and facilitators may be to create "safe-enough"<sup>90</sup> containers for practicing this vulnerability. N., a Christian professor with teaching roles at both a seminary and in a business school, describes how his students demonstrate places of vulnerability even as he names how this is one of the key purposes of inter-religious education. He shares,

And it seems to me, that's the amount of risk in an engagement like this...is that it becomes an 'undone' sort of experience. How is this going to change you as a student in your curriculum and then in your ministry, on the one hand, or your work with an agency, as a leader [on] the other?<sup>91</sup>

N. is trying to capture what happens to students when they encounter dissonance—they come "undone" (perhaps also, the experience as "undone" is less easy to manage?); he also affirms that being changed is one obvious and essential aspect of successful inter-religious learning. This embrace of risk or uncertainty also appeared in N.'s descriptions of why we teach inter-religiously. He notes,

fostering trust between people, beyond the kind of voluntary networks that people choose for themselves, and building new networks. That's the challenge of inter-religious engagements...So, helping people be reflective about those limits, about the ways our discourses and practices narrow options for us, and then recognizing commonalities—across the things we call our traditions and recognizing the differences...But these things are

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<sup>90</sup> Lev Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" articulates a specific, ineffable place between total comfort and paralyzing fear—teachers should facilitate students' movement into this space, where just the right amount of dissonance positively provokes learning and some degree of mastery is still possible. Similarly, a totally safe space would not foster enough disruption for transformative learning to take place, but neither is extreme provocation helpful for the development of new ways of being.

<sup>91</sup> N., in discussion with the author, October 17, 2014.

fluid, they are malleable, they're strategies that migrate and discovering how they migrate and where they migrate, and then intentionally engaging our traditions in behalf of the deepest purpose, which is to eliminate violence, is the real challenge before us.<sup>92</sup>

Similarly, J. connects a positive side of vulnerability, one that can open learning spaces to joy or playfulness; she describes the positive attribute of vulnerability, or openness in her response to my question about what helps students succeed in her classes and programs.

J. shares,

When I see them stepping out and taking leadership, that's when I feel like, what we are trying to do educationally is working. Because I think it requires an openness and a quality of playfulness. These are qualities that allow folks to engage with enthusiasm in learning about something that's new to them, something that's unfamiliar. Something that someone else might react with a sense of fear or a sense of its 'otherness.'<sup>93</sup>

J.'s assertion that playfulness stemming from an openness—the “opposite” of fear—is related to R.'s desire that his students fall in love with difference. One way teachers and facilitators can evoke experiences that foster places of positive vulnerability is to model perspective taking practice.

Finally, the lens of colleagues' perceptions encourages us to practice perspective taking. The ram's horn is essential for marking one's new year, it has always been—for one individual—a symbol of the high holy days. How is it seen by that person's colleague, who eschews all animal products because she believes every living being's soul is equal? If one can successfully enter into an experience from a new point of view, not only do we learn something new about the experience, we learn something new about our colleague and about ourselves. When one returns to his reflection on the symbol of

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<sup>92</sup> N., in discussion with the author, October 17, 2014.

<sup>93</sup> J., in discussion with the author, October 17, 2014.

the ram's horn, it now includes the more nuanced inclusion of the incorporation of his colleague's perspective. In this way, reflective practice becomes a multi-faceted model for engagement and relationship.

In "Framing Learning Through Reflection Within Carper's Fundamental Ways of Knowing in Nursing," Christopher Johns recognizes that what we think we know (our perceived positions as experts) is less than helpful for human encounters. Johns writes, "This [empirical] approach may be acceptable for more technical aspects of nursing work, but it will inevitably fail when responding to the humanness that is widely acknowledged to be central within nursing."<sup>94</sup> In a way, empirical evidence *reduces* humans to objects; we must avoid this in order to most fruitfully engage with one another. Johns posits that

learning through reflection is a process of enlightenment (to understand 'who I am'), empowerment (to have the courage and commitment to take necessary action to change 'who I am'), and emancipation (to liberate myself from previous ways of being to become 'who I need to be')."<sup>95</sup>

Later, when we investigate potential best practices for inter-religious educators, we will return to examples such as Johns's. In the meantime, it's important to note how reflective practice is a thread that runs through disciplines and most frequently includes students who are becoming professionals in various contexts, but as a means to that particular—professional—end. One aim of this research is to investigate how students can engage in these practices for their own sake, and for whichever contexts they will inhabit.

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<sup>94</sup> Christopher Johns, "Framing Learning through Reflection within Carper's Fundamental Ways of Knowing in Nursing," *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 22 (1991): 230.

<sup>95</sup> Johns, "Framing Learning through Reflection," 226.



## Is Reflective Practice Essential for Inter-religious Learning?

In later chapters, research with practitioners and their artifacts, examined through grounded theory, explores whether or not reflective practice is essential, and when and how it is fostered in inter-religious learning settings.<sup>96</sup> Before delving into this research, this chapter seeks to query Schön and consider how primary features of reflective practice might be instrumental for fostering inter-religious learning. Despite the fact that (to our knowledge) Schön did not consider inter-religious education when he wrote his seminal *The Reflective Practitioner*, many of his concepts and descriptions of ways of knowing seem well suited for inter-religious education. In this section, we will connect Schön's concepts with ideas from narrative pedagogy in consideration of best practices in inter-religious education.

Inter-religious education can involve explicit instruction, or may come out of organic student encounters within a class. In either case, participants must work to identify and articulate their own interior spaces even as they share them with others, experience disruptions to their understanding of the world, and encounter accounts of the interior spaces of others. Sometimes, our self-knowledge doesn't manifest until it comes into contact with the alterity of others. This contact is an example of what Schön considered a unique, puzzling situation that calls for a new response. Schön articulates this idea of as-yet unmanifested self-knowledge. He writes:

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<sup>96</sup> For the purposes of this research, settings can include explicitly inter-religious courses—e.g., “Inter-religious Dialogue and Leadership,” “Buddhist-Christian Dialogue,”—courses that turn out to be inter-religious—e.g. “Lamentations” with both Christian and Jewish students—or programs or settings that focus on or foster inter-religious engagement and learning, or simply a class in religion that includes diverse students, where they are asked to bring in their own contexts.

When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is *in* our action.<sup>97</sup>

So, inter-religious encounters might be understood as pregnant places where, at a loss to describe our response, we must move nimbly and gracefully within the moment—knowing and acting at the same time. For example, if one is in the midst of conversation with another, and his thoughts about the afterlife are in question, he must—all at once—measure his response, consider what his tradition tells him, intuit what his classmate might know or fear, and identify how comfortable he feels sharing what degree of information. Later (even a few minutes later), upon further reflection, he can identify the steps in that process of knowing-*in*-action. Through reflection, he can consider the patterns of his thoughts in that situation and learn both about his responses and about his part in the dialogue.

Over time, participants in this kind of dialogue—especially if they are applying reflective practice alongside their dialogue work—become virtuosos in their adeptness and flexibility. As Schön puts it:

What I want to propose is this: The practitioner has built up a *repertoire* of examples, images, understandings, and actions...A practitioner's repertoire includes the whole of his experience insofar as it is accessible to him for understanding and action. When a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he *sees* it as something already present in his repertoire.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 49.

<sup>98</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 138. Emphasis original.

In the world of inter-religious dialogue, leadership, and education, situations perceived to be unique seem endless. Teaching cannot account for all possibilities; instead, inter-religious educators must instead help students cultivate the kinds of practices that will help them build their repertoire of responses. We can consider dialogue practice—and reflection thereon—as models for ongoing incorporation into ones repertoire. In this way, not only does “reflection-in-action necessarily [involve] experiment,”<sup>99</sup> but:

each new experience of reflection-in-action enriches [the student’s] repertoire...Reflection-in-action in a unique case may be generalized to other cases, not by giving rise to general principles, but by contributing to the practitioner’s repertoire of exemplary themes from which, in the subsequent cases of his practice, he may compose new variations.<sup>100</sup>

The composition of new variations. What a holistic and encouraging metaphor for understanding inter-religious encounter. Experienced practitioners may offer “exemplary themes,” but their larger task is to provide opportunities for practice, and equal opportunities to reflect upon that practice.

How might inter-religious educators facilitate these practices? This research project hypothesizes that access to narrative pedagogies and participation in the kinds of activities Taggart, Wilson, McKernan, and Brookfield encourage will provide fruitful ground upon which students can build their practice. In later chapters, we shall examine this hypothesis in detail and determine whether research bears it out. In the meantime, it may behoove us to keep in mind one model from Taggart and Wilson. They identify three levels of how teachers engage with their work. They hold that reflective practice helps

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<sup>99</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 141.

<sup>100</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 140.

teachers engage at higher and more complex levels of practice and reflection. Taggart and Wilson articulate the following three levels, including:

Technical level: reference past experiences; teacher competency towards meeting outcomes; focus on behavior/content/skill; simple, theoretical description;

Contextual level: looks at alternative practices; choices based on knowledge and value commitments; content related to context/student needs; analysis, clarification; validation of principles;

Dialectical level: addresses moral, ethical, or sociopolitical issues; disciplined inquiry; individual autonomy; self-understanding.<sup>101</sup>

One could apply these directly onto considerations of increased repertoire for inter-religious leaders. For example, novice inter-religious leaders depend to a greater degree on past experiences, including experiences from their own religious or ethical tradition. When considering how they feel about an encounter, they may focus on what happened in the encounter, without referencing power dynamics, notions of privilege, or a more complex self-understanding.

Some interview participants articulated possible stages of development when they described positive capacities in inter-religious education. That is, when describing categories of capacities, they often connected some skills with a sense of “beginning” in the process, and later or more developed skills with a sense of “getting better” in the process. For example, in continuing her reflection on “playfulness” as related to a kind of openness or humility that marks good inter-religious engagement, J. moves from talking about her own initial movements into inter-religious work as sparked by mere curiosity. J. reflects,

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<sup>101</sup> Taggart and Wilson, *Promoting Reflective Thinking in Teachers*, 3.

So curiosity, playfulness. I think another layer that's not exactly an attribute that I always start my courses with is a focus on personal motivation for the work. There is such a range of motivations that bring people into this work. Speaking for myself, motivation can start out as fairly shallow. For example, I grew up in a family and community where Christianity was dominant and so there was kind of the fascination with other religions because they were so foreign to me.

The positive of this is it sparked my curiosity and it led to a lot of other deepening commitments and concerns. This is increasingly something I want to understand in more depth, and apply to my own approach to interfaith work – the idea that curiosity is the essential first posture for interfaith work. It doesn't necessarily come naturally or easily to most of us.<sup>102</sup>

Using J.'s example, one possible "first posture" might be merely a neutral or slightly positive curiosity about something different; perhaps, using R.'s examples, students would next be encouraged to *practice* engaging with difference and reflecting upon that developing practice. Indeed, the prevalence of site visits or immersion learning experiences as means for students to practice or cultivate a posture of openness speaks to inter-religious educators' understanding of how to help foster students' development from a beginning motivation for engagement into a more fuller one.

C. serves as chaplain and instructor (in both the divinity school and in the religious studies classes) at a large, private university. Her students have a service learning requirement that takes them away from the more gentrified and less economically diverse campus neighborhoods and into the heart of their city. C. spent a few moments in the interview reflecting on how this requirement creates logistical challenges for the course instructors, but is worth it for the exposure and opportunities for reflection it brings the students. C. began by articulating why having the students engage

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<sup>102</sup> J., in discussion with the author, October 17, 2014.

with their wider community is necessary, stating, “This works best when people are doing it for more than just—you know, ‘spectator sport’ kind of interest.”<sup>103</sup> A paraphrasing and clarifying question connected C.’s earlier comments about outcomes; C. was asked,

So am I correct that in summarizing for the courses, one of the outcomes—is it exposure, exposure to these thinkers, to these leaders? Also exposure to things outside the ordinary rounds and also a connection between what they might be asked to do in the future and what you are offering?

C.’s elaboration demonstrates an articulation of development—from initial exposure, to recognition, to meaningful, demonstrated growth in leadership—that her program intends for its students. C. describes this progression, noting,

Yes. And for the undergrads that exposure is important. But then also, just kind of challenging some of the assumptions. Or, for the undergrads’ course, it’s also as important to get them out into the community as it is to introduce them to these concepts. Because if they come here and their only experiences are with the campus or some campus sponsored trip that they’ve done--these students are great at going around the world on [campus branded programs]. But to spend four years in a place and never go downtown, to never meet somebody who lives--to think there’s actually a reason to live in [this city] other than to be at [this university], and to encounter some of the realities that they have encountered in working with the community.

One of my students this semester is working with [...] a nonprofit that works to support families of murder victims and in [this community], and releases prisoners. And so they organize prayer vigils. Whenever somebody is shot in gun violence in [the community], they organize the prayer vigil around for that person and that community. And this is important but you could completely live a sheltered [university] in [the] distance where you don’t even know, or you are scared of going to [the city] because there’s gun violence, rather than recognizing there are real people, and there are real conditions and there are systematic reasons—all

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<sup>103</sup> C., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014.

of the things that go into play in those kinds of community relations.

I was joking with somebody last week, one of the biggest challenges I have in this service learning is getting them to their service site. Because they are so scared to take the bus anywhere. And where else do you meet the humanity in your neighborhood than on the bus? So I've had to, this semester if they don't have cars themselves then I had to figure out how to get them to their site because there's just this mental block around using the bus.

And there's a part of me that gets so frustrated by that then there's also part of me that gets it. You know most of the kids who at least come to this university have...never had to use public transport. And so why would they, probably, they want to use it here? And they want to think about it in terms of system economic discrepancies. They should think about, in terms of well—it's going to take us an hour to get to and from our service site if we have to take a bus. We could possibly dedicate an hour.

So I haven't quite figured out the teaching tool of how do they overcome that. Maybe I have to go with them and I have to say, 'Okay, I'm going to do this with you the first time so that you can see how it is, you can see what it looks like.' But this semester I'm taking an easier route just to help them find their cars. And I feel like I've done this service to them by not, but that just speaks to the skills and talking about difference that they've learned through inter-religious work, or applicable [skills] across a broad range of difference.<sup>104</sup>

C. differentiates between the kind of traveling experience the university offers, where students stay in campus accommodations in a foreign city, with a more difficult local engagement that students find more challenging. She struggles with whether or not to make their exposure easier for them, wondering whether or not part of the purpose of their required engagement is actually to participate in a new and different lived experience.

When she indicates that her choices to help them avoid public transportation does them a disservice, she points out that the skills they gain in [literally] traversing

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<sup>104</sup> C., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014.

difference and moving from personal discomfort into a more nuanced understanding of their community are applicable, inter-religiously defined skills.

At the contextual level, we can imagine that an inter-religious leader with some repertoire of reflection and practice might have some knowledge and experience about practices, might be able to better articulate their own commitments, and have an increased vocabulary or set of models regarding analyzing the encounter. Similarly, more experienced inter-religious leaders can connect understandings of power and privilege, wider concepts of intercultural and sociopolitical issues, and a more nuanced self-understanding when encountering alterity. Throughout growth through these levels, consistent reflection may enable students to familiarize themselves with the tools they are using, even as they develop them.

Reflective practice is a rich set of methods and models for growing one's ability to think while acting, especially in situations that precede learning, which can be considered puzzles (Schön) or disequilibriums (Piaget). In professions where practitioners frequently encounter disruptions, difference, or alterity, reflective practice can provide both a means to become more adept at solving these puzzles, and better at their professions overall as their repertoires grow. In particular, educators and health care professionals have built upon Schön's work to address the specific needs and skills of their communities. Further research will uncover whether or not reflective practice is an essential skill for inter-religious learners and how, if it is essential, it can best be fostered.



## Chapter 4: Exploring Resilience as a Capacity for Inter-Religious Learning

### Introduction

The work of Norman Garmezy has been instrumental in the development of the study of human resiliency as a field. The literature begins in child psychology and psychiatry in the 1960s and 1970s on “vulnerable children,” “social effectiveness,” “protective factors,” “temperament,” and “social competence,” including the work of Norman Garmezy, Edward Zigler, Ann Masten, Michael Rutter, and Leslie Phillips. Moving into the 1980s and 1990s, research covered such concepts as “stress resistant,” “risk,” “vulnerability,” “coping,” and “adjustment,” with the work of the abovementioned authors as well as J.K. Felsman, Eric Dubow, A. L. Rabin, and J. Aronoff. Resiliency emerged as a concept that could be studied and applied in education.

As early as the 1970s, Garmezy and Masten were identifying examples of “at risk” children who succeeded despite their circumstances. Garmezy in particular sought to lead a shift in researching moving from how to protect children in troubled circumstances to trying to understand how children who thrived anyway did so. By 2006, developmental psychologists and educators had made that transition; the new perspective is exemplified with Steven J. Condly (summing the work of Garmezy, Masten, and their peers in “Resilience in Children: A Review of Literature with Implications for Education”) writes,

there is a clear class of children who defy the conventional wisdom and not only survive hostile environments but also actually thrive; these are the resilient...resilience is...perceived as a label that defines the interaction of a child with trauma or a toxic environment in which

success...is achieved by virtue of the child's abilities, motivations, and support systems.<sup>105</sup>

Over the course of shifting from looking at children who weren't thriving to seeking to understand the special capacities that thriving children had, terms such as "invulnerability," "adaptation," and "competence" were used by researchers.

The idea of "competence" as a positive attribute to be studied exemplifies the switch to studying positive capacities in children instead of keeping track of the trauma surrounding them. Ann Masten, herself a pioneer in this area, tracks the development of the field in "Resilience in Developmental Psychopathology: Contributions of the Project Competence Longitudinal Study," written in 2012. Masten writes, "To investigate resilience, we defined and measured the quality of adaptive behavior...the nature and severity of adversity or risk encountered, and the individual or contextual differences that might account for the variable patterns of adaptation..."<sup>106</sup> Note that current resilience research still focuses on the behaviors and capacities of individual children—developmental psychologists have made recommendations to parents and teachers, but teachers have not made links between what makes up resilience and what can be taught or fostered at school. A current scan of the field of resilience in education reveals studies for teachers *about* resilience and programs that can build resilience in at risk youth, but there is no mention of how resilience and inter-religious education may be linked, or can benefit from one another. Currently we know a great deal about resilient children and

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<sup>105</sup> Steven J. Condly, "Resilience in Children: A Review of Literature with Implications for Education," *Urban Education* 41 (2006): 211-236.

<sup>106</sup> Ann S. Masten and Auke Tellegen, "Resilience in Developmental Psychopathology: Contributions of the Project Competence Longitudinal Study," *Development and Psychopathology* 24 (2012): 345-361.

even about the resources that sustain them. Next steps for widening the field will include broadening our understanding of resilience in adult populations, linking resilience to specific areas, like inter-religious education, and learning how such connections cause learning to flourish (or not).

In this chapter, we will briefly examine key features of resiliency as it has been applied in developmental psychology and education, with particular attention to the latter. This research seeks to explore if and how resiliency might be an essential ingredient for inter-religious education. To that end, this chapter will connect aspects of resilience that are particularly integral to inter-religious learning.

#### From Vulnerable to Invulnerable: Moving from Negative to Positive Attributes in Children in Resilience Research

In 1970, the father of resiliency research, Norman Garmezy, presented a paper entitled “Vulnerability Research and the Issue of Primary Prevention” at the annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric<sup>107</sup> Association. By “primary prevention,” Garmezy means “coping,” and he sought to understand how some young people—even with few resources—coped with stress and trauma better than others. This was a puzzle; researchers were seeking to learn why some children succeeded against all odds. Could they learn from those “high risk” children? As Garmezy put it, “a simple declaration of physical, psychosocial or sociocultural resources cannot explain divergent paths to

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<sup>107</sup> Orthopsychiatry is the study of mental or developmental disorders, with particular emphasis on children and child development. This field would now be known as child and adolescent psychiatry.

adaptation or to deviance.”<sup>108</sup> This “variability in outcomes”<sup>109</sup> led to Garnezy’s consideration of development from the end (either the traumatized and not flourishing, or traumatized and *still* flourishing) child, to try and determine what had justified that outcome. This was a new lens with which to consider the outcome—previously, researchers (including Garnezy) had begun with the starting situation or traumas (poverty, illness, sick mother, low IQ.) Garnezy marks this new lens and the meaning for how researchers saw children within the context of his outcomes as he writes,

Provide us with a slum child who is forging a pattern of strength and we will cast about for environmental surrogates who *must* have served as inoculators against despair, for events that *must* have encouraged hope rather than hopelessness, for inner resources that *must* have proclaimed vitality rather than helplessness. However, were we to convert this same slum child into someone prone to violence or aberration, our focus would be turned with equal efficiency and perhaps even greater facility to alternate figures and facets that would buttress our perception of deviance.<sup>110</sup>

Note that even Garnezy’s verb “inoculate” suggests the idea that something external, when applied to a child, can foster healing and strength. Instead, what Garnezy and his peers find is that the strength is already present, within some children and adults.

How does this relate to possibilities for inter-religious education? When we examine engagement in inter-religious settings, we will find that some participants are able to withstand the disruption and dissonance of alterity better than others. And yet,

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<sup>108</sup> Norman Garnezy, “Vulnerability Research and the Issue of Primary Prevention,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 41 no. 1, 106.

<sup>109</sup> Garnezy, “Vulnerability Research and the Issue of Primary Prevention,” 106.

<sup>110</sup> Garnezy, “Vulnerability Research and the Issue of Primary Prevention,” 106. Emphasis original.

learning cannot take place if participants abandon the project as soon as they feel uncomfortable. One task of inter-religious educators and facilitators is to create containers and methods to foster a kind of in-the-moment resiliency in students, so that they might draw upon interior and even external resources (relationship with peers, support from the instructor, the required nature of a course as extrinsic motivation) to remain participants.

And just as reflective practice ought to be the focus of educational activities, especially in inter-religious settings, so too can resilience be included in models and practices that can be taught and fostered. Although Garmezy made this move in 1970, it is still infrequently<sup>111</sup> included in stated capacities for inter-religious learning, or even religious or multi-cultural learning. Garmezy's early questions provide some ideas for qualities we can examine in this project. He writes,

Can we use our schools and clinics as centers for training these [high-risk] children in more adaptive techniques for coping? Can we use participation in successful play to increase the flexibility of the response repertoires of these children? Can we stimulate adaptive behavior by introducing into such training centers healthy children who can serve as models for the vulnerable child?<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> However, as we shall see in the recommendations section, resilience as an inter-religious capacity is increasingly a topic of study, even within the period of time surrounding this research. One survey participant, in the optional space for additional comments, shared, "These areas [of reflective practice and resilience] have recently gained increasing emphasis for us at [name of organization]—if I were to take this in three months, I would be answering much more confidently that we are frequently and very frequently intentionally provoking high degrees of dissonance (we've just redesigned our ILI around these ideas." The Survey Instrument Questions and Results can be found in Appendix G.3.

<sup>112</sup> Garmezy, "Vulnerability Research and the Issue of Primary Prevention," 114.

We might well ask the following questions: Can we use our spaces of inter-religious encounter as centers for training students in more adaptive techniques for prolonged engagement with others? Can we use participation in study groups and microteaching to increase the flexibility of response repertoires of these students? Can we stimulate practice in withstanding disruption by introducing models for successful relationship and engagement?

### Facets of Resilience Research: Competence, Coping, and Community

In this section, we will explore major themes in resilience research and discover which features might be salient for religious- and inter-religious education. One caveat arises when we realize the limits of possible applications. This chapter will highlight those limits and bracket them to connect with our later research findings. Finally, this chapter will conclude with major questions raised by our examination of resilience as a potential capacity for inter-religious learning. All three strands of our understanding of resilience—competence, coping, and community—offer something that we might glean for inter-religious education.

### Competence and Coping: Focus on the Negative, Focus on Individuals

Even after Garmezy made the initial move from focusing on the negative to examining what might “inoculate” some children against trauma, researchers still tracked the negative attributes of children’s surroundings and circumstances. However, once researchers moved to considering the development of “competence,” some positive attributes came into focus. Ingrid Schoon, in her *Risk and Resilience: Adaptations in Changing Times*, identifies the pitfall in focusing on the negative, and demonstrates how

far the field had come by 2006. Schoon argues, “A focus on resilience and resources, on the other hand, aims to understand adaptive development in spite of risk exposure and to maximise wellness even before maladjustment has occurred,”<sup>113</sup> and underscores her point, writing, “the resilience framework entails emphasis not on deficits but on areas of strength.”<sup>114</sup> As we shall see, once researchers began considering areas of strength as well as deficit, and examined “understanding adaptive development” as part of a wider interpersonal matrix, the field began to include capacities that can be isolated, taught, developed, and modeled in educational settings.

By the early 1980s, some developmental psychologists began to tease out the meaning of “competence” or “social competence” as related but separate from resilience. In “Social Competence as a Developmental Construct,” Everett Waters and L. Alan Sroufe define competence in a way particularly suited to our purposes. That is, they move from considering a person’s interior resources to thinking about what a person *does*. This action focus is helpful as we consider which capacities can be taught and fostered. Waters and Sroufe write, “Competence is viewed as an integrative concept which refers broadly to an *ability to generate and coordinate flexible, adaptive responses to demands and to generate and capitalize on opportunities in the environment* (i.e., effectiveness).”<sup>115</sup> Their idea of “generating...flexible and adaptive” response hearkens to Schön’s puzzles, as

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<sup>113</sup> Ingrid Schoon, *Risk and Resilience: Adaptations in Changing Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 158.

<sup>114</sup> Schoon, *Risk and Resilience: Adaptations in Changing Times*, 160.

<sup>115</sup> Everett Waters and L. Alan Sroufe, “Social Competence as a Developmental Construct.” *Developmental Review*, no. 3 (1983): 80. Emphasis original.

well as the ideas of virtuosity and repertoires. Competence in this form is also easier to measure as a competency. That is, we can look for evidence of inner resilience, but it seems difficult to articulate as a learning outcome. In contrast, competence per Waters's and Sroufe's definition points us to looking for responses to concrete moments. One can imagine, in a classroom setting, creating a microteaching opportunity to engage in a disruptive idea—the use of case studies comes to mind as one potential example. After the initial lesson, time for reflection can be expanded to include questions like, “What was your initial impression?,” “What was your process for working through the dilemma?,” “Did your ideas change during the encounter?,” and “What resources (prior experiences or knowledge, modeling by instructor or peers, relationship) helped you work through the experience?”

We notice that these are questions of reflection; indeed, the two are related. If we consider reflection to be a flexible, responsive action-in-practice, this concept meets another part of Waters's and Sroufe's articulation of competence. They continue, writing, “Competence...*is identified with the ability to mobilize and coordinate these resources in such a way that opportunities are created and the potentials or resources in the environment are realized; again, for a good developmental outcome.*”<sup>116</sup> This idea of “coordination” reminds us of metaphors used by reflective practitioners describing artists or jazz musicians. In addition, coordination is a practice. That is, students can identify the components of coordination (identifying resources, applying ideas, evaluating their success, reflecting on the outcome), practice them, and share their practice with others.

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<sup>116</sup> Waters and Sroufe, “Social Competence as a Developmental Construct,” 83. Emphasis original.



Coordination is also a positive attribute (in the sense that it is a skill one possesses, unlike precursor ideas of resiliency that sought to describe how a person was *not* failing to thrive) in addition to being a practice. In “IQ and Ego-Resiliency: Conceptual and Empirical Connections and Separateness,” Jack Block and Adam M. Kremen note both that competence is a practice and that it is also rooted in outward engagement with others. First, Block and Kremen write, “Within a single life, too, it will be observed that at times a person is much more resourceful and adaptively effective than at other times.”<sup>117</sup> With this in mind, we move from the idea of “an invulnerable person” whose resilience allows her to overcome all manner of obstacles to the sense that all of us are more or less resourceful and adaptive at different points. This is good news for those of us who would seek to develop resilience as a capacity in education. Similarly, we find in Block’s and Kremen’s connection from resilience to engagement another part of the capacity that can be taught. They write, “ego-resilience is expected to predispose individuals not only to an absence of susceptibility to anxiety but also to a positive engagement with the world, as manifested by positive affect and openness to experience.”<sup>118</sup> And here again is a practice; students can practice a posture of openness to experience. This also can be deliberately included in direct instruction and modeling in inter-religious classes and settings. Below, we shall explore more deeply how “positive

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<sup>117</sup> Jack Block and Adam M. Kremen, “IQ and Ego-Resiliency: Conceptual and Empirical Connections and Separateness,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 2 (1996): 349.

<sup>118</sup> Block and Kremen, “IQ and Ego-Resiliency: Conceptual and Empirical Connections and Separateness,” 351.

engagement with the world” supports a kind of resilience that might support deeper and longer-lasting student engagement.

Longer-lasting engagement with the materials, settings, and encounters of inter-religious education is necessary because inter-religious learning requires movement, over time, through several ways of being; this theory of development is described both formally by inter-religious scholar educators and by voices in our participant interviews. For example, imagine the time involved in practicing and becoming more masterful at the kinds of learning Judith Berling describes, writing, “Learning in a diverse world requires not merely mastering some set of information but also learning to understand and negotiate areas of human difference, envisioning new ways of being and new possibilities.”<sup>119</sup> While at least one interview participant noted that, at some level, her role does require her to give students enough new information—particularly about new traditions or religions—mastering mere information takes some time—learning to understand difference can be for many of us a life-long practice, and becoming visionary in the way one regards conflict and possibilities may rarely be possible in academic time parcels.

In fact, each one of these categories of learning can be broken apart into smaller tasks or realizations that inter-religious educators try to facilitate. F. is a Jewish professor of religion in both a rabbinical school and a large public university; he also serves on several large inter-religious non-profits and facilitates Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim adult educational events. F. describes the kind of beginning reflective work that

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<sup>119</sup> Judith Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 26.

students and participants often encounter earlier in their learning processes. He began by asserting that initial introductory knowledge about other traditions should lead to more substantial developments. When asked about the outcomes of one of his classes, he began, stating,

A student is able to—there are a couple of different levels I think—the student is able to be literate in some of the concepts, practices, and language and vocabulary of the other religious traditions (and we are talking only about three and that is, right? We are talking about Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.) So people, everyone who leaves the class has to know, because I ask them on a quiz, on a midterm or a final what--they have to know the words ‘Surah’ and ‘Hadith’ and ‘Ayat’ and what this ‘Quran’ actually means.

What does ‘Islam’ mean? And I don’t—these are just real basics, but they have to know that, same thing about ‘Torah,’ ‘Talmud,’ stuff like that. It is a little bit less problematic in the Christian world because we live in such a Christianized culture, that kind of vocabulary and assumption is there.

So there is that—another outcome is a, I think, is a deeper respect for a scripture and [the] religious sensibilities of another religious, at least two other religious communities with the expectation of the hope that transfers beyond...creates a kind of attitudinal development.<sup>120</sup>

After a pause, F. moved to describing the kind of “learning to negotiate human difference” to which Berling points; F. continues,

And flexibility in thinking that is really important, we spend a lot of time on reading, what is the reading process, when we read things, not just words on a page but when we read people, when we read people’s clothing, when we read architecture, how are we actually processing the information that we are getting, how much are we looking objectively of the material and to what extent are we inserting our own history into our processing, all of that is really, we are very content about that, we are very, what is the word for it?<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> F., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014.

<sup>121</sup> F., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014.

F. was encouraged with a question prompting, “But it’s deliberate...” and F. affirmed, “Deliberate, we are deliberate.”<sup>122</sup> When asked about challenges to students making that move from learning content to learning practice, he answered,

I think the overwhelming one is getting beyond the--, and [then to] acknowledge stereotypes, I think that is the issue because it creates, I think, real barriers from the very beginning that people aren’t really aware of, it’s a kind of pre-conceived notion, prejudices, pre-judgments that we have that we are really unaware of... They are not intentional—that color our ability to see the phenomenon that we are looking at in a way that is, I don’t want to use the word ‘positive’ but in a way that is more real, right.

Or a way that that phenomenon is associated with something, a phenomenon that is associated with, let’s say religion or culture—where the observer sees it in the way the presenter would like it to be seen or sees it himself or herself.<sup>123</sup>

By identifying the ability of a learner to see from her co-learner’s point of view, F. echoes here classic foreparents of inter-religious dialogue including Raimon Pannikar, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and Leonard Swidler; Berling also captures this interpretive process when she declares,

Unraveling, naming, and describing the threads of the learning process offer an interpretation of that process. The five threads are 1) encountering difference or entering another world; 2) one’s initial response...;<sup>124</sup> 3) conversation and dialogue on several levels; 4) living out what has been learned; and 5) internalizing the process.<sup>125</sup>

Again, we see that what can be phrased succinctly can take years of practice and engagement. For those who see inter-religious dialogue as personally spiritually

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<sup>122</sup> F., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014.

<sup>123</sup> F., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014.

<sup>124</sup> Berling’s original phrasing is, “one’s initial response as a Christian,” but nothing in this research indicates that it matters which religion or tradition is starting place in this process.

<sup>125</sup> Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds*, 2.

enriching (for example, *à la* Knitter’s *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*, or countless mono-religious adult education earnest endeavors to understand neighbors), part of the reason spiritual development happens is that inter-religious encounter can take time—giving reflective practice time a chance to connect to spiritual and emotional practices, new habits, the time to take chances and try new ways of engaging, and time to build relationships. In the next section, relationship building particularly will be related to resilience; let us keep in mind that relationships also take time to build, another reason resilience to withstand new encounters is beneficial for longer-lasting inter-religious engagement.

#### “Person-Environment Interactions”: How Relationships and Community Support Resilience and Lessons for Interfaith Learning

Ingrid Schoon explores the idea of “adaptation” as a key part of resilience in her *Risk and Resilience: Adaptations in Changing Times*. Schoon is more interested in the “ordinary”<sup>126</sup> adaptive processes”<sup>127</sup> as a dynamic, ongoing process than in what might inoculate an individual from the impact of her surroundings. For Schoon, adaptation is part of a life-long process and individuals are intimately connected through their relationships with others; both of these influence how and why one might be resilient in a given situation. As we review Schoon’s emphasis on inter-connectedness and the dynamic construction of life course, let us keep in mind possible features that might be mapped onto inter-religious education.

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<sup>126</sup> Schoon riffs on “ordinary” from Ann S. Masten’s 2001 assertion that resilience is but an “ordinary magic” in the latter’s *American Psychologist* article of the same name.

<sup>127</sup> Schoon, *Risk and Resilience*, 12.

Schoon articulates five principles as part of the concept of “life-course” in competency; she enumerates the following:

1. Human development is a life-long process.
2. Individuals construct their own life course through choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances, a principle also referred to as human agency.
3. The life course is embedded and shaped by social structures and the historical times and places experienced by individuals over the lifetime.
4. The developmental antecedents and consequences of life transitions, events and behaviour patterns vary according to their timing in a person’s life.
5. Lives are lived interdependently, and social and historical influences bear on this network of linked lives.<sup>128</sup>

While these concepts are connected to resilience as understood by Garmezy, for example, we see that Schoon has definitively moved beyond thinking about flaws that need to be addressed, or disordered individuals that might be studied. Instead, she has moved into considering interdependent relationships and how these “networks of shared relationships”<sup>129</sup> surround individual development. As Schoon puts it, “resilience is a multidimensional phenomenon.”<sup>130</sup> All five of Schoon’s life-course aspects coordinate with the work of educators, and can be included in inter-religious pedagogy. Indeed, Schoon takes a kind of holistic approach to understanding how and when individuals are resilient, and how they can both learn from their own experiences and help teach others in their “network of linked lives.” This is the stuff of both religious education and inter-religious education. Is it possible to leverage this network to foster resilient practices?

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<sup>128</sup> Schoon, *Risk and Resilience*, 23-24.

<sup>129</sup> Schoon, *Risk and Resilience*, 31.

<sup>130</sup> Schoon, *Risk and Resilience*, 147.

Are religious or inter-religious communities particularly suited to cultivating positive networks for this growth?

#### Religion and Resilience? Current Research on Possible Links and Limitations

Pioneers in the area of resilience research barely mention religion as a factor in resilience. Occasionally, one will note that “religiousness” can provide an external resource for those suffering from illness or trauma, but it has been left relatively unexplored, particularly when compared to the field as a whole. In “Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor,” by Kenneth I. Pargament and Jeremy Cummings describes the obstacles faced by those wishing to include religion in their survey of human resilience. They write,

In spite of the fact that the founding figures in psychology viewed religion as central to an understanding of human behavior, the field of psychology largely neglected religious issues for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When religion was considered, it was often (1) viewed as a source of pathology, (2) measured by a few global religious items, and (3) explained in terms of purportedly more basic phenomena...The number of studies on religion has grown, and it has become clear through this research that religiousness can play a significant role in response to major life stressors.<sup>131</sup>

Pargament and Cummings assert “religiousness is a significant resilience factor for many people.”<sup>132</sup> Pargament in particular has done much of the foundational research connecting religiousness and resilience, and he bemoans the fact that researchers have

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<sup>131</sup> Kenneth I. Pargament and Jeremy Cummings, “Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor,” 193.

<sup>132</sup> Pargament and Cummings, “Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor,” 193.

“neglected or diminished”<sup>133</sup> the role of religion to this point. For a religious educator or practical theologian, though, Pargament and Cummings cover no new ground. They sum how prayer and membership in a religious community give comfort and even pain relief to the afflicted, can give a sense of meaning in the face of trauma, and explain how some therapists (their examples are all Christian) use “psychospiritual interventions” to enhance their work with patients.<sup>134</sup> Their final assertion “religiousness can be a catalyst for positive life changes and stress-related growth,”<sup>135</sup> is true enough, but they provide no road map for how religious or inter-religious educators might connect religious or ethical commitments and fostering resilience as a capacity for learning.

#### Limitations of Applying Resilience to Inter-Religious Education, and Further Questions

While reflective practice included competencies that dovetail well with religious- and inter-religious education, resilience as a possible competency fits less well.

Limitations include: focus on the personal, to the exclusion of considering how resilience might be fostered in group settings like classrooms; focus on internal processes; and lack of research on how people might learn resilience practices.

And yet, challenges in life—and in the classroom—are normal, particularly when we move beyond shallow, more initial relationships and experiences into the turbulence that truer encounters can create. As we close this chapter, let us examine some possible

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<sup>133</sup> Pargament and Cummings, “Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor,” 207.

<sup>134</sup> For example, clients with an exaggerated sense of suffering can be reminded that the crucifixion was “particularly terrible” and yet Jesus did not attempt to escape it.

<sup>135</sup> Pargament and Cummings, “Anchored by Faith: Religion as a Resilience Factor,” 193.



connections between competence or resilience and the wider learning community that surrounds individuals. These connections are most likely to be fruitful for understanding how resilience might work as a capacity in inter-religious learning.

Masten and J. Douglas Coatsworth, writing in 1998, echo the emergence of “competence” as a key, related concept as well as the addition of context and community as important factors in an individual’s resilience. In, “The Development of Competence in Favorable and Unfavorable Environments: Lessons From Research on Successful Children,” they note, “[Competence] refers to good adaptation and not necessarily to superb achievement,”<sup>136</sup> and “...the two most widely reported predictors of resilience appear to be relationships with caring prosocial adults and good intellectual functioning.”<sup>137</sup> This makes sense: not only that relationships can support individual, interior resilience, but perhaps relationships and community create spaces where resilience-building practices can be worked out. If adaptation and the importance of relationship are linked, we can perhaps expand possibilities for resilience practice in community.

Monique Boekaerts explores coping and personal and academic goals, and seeks to understand how teachers might facilitate growth in coping behaviors. Boekaerts carefully examines examples of “stressors” for students, and recommends ways teachers

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<sup>136</sup> Ann S. Masten and J. Douglas Coatsworth, “The Development of Competence in Favorable and Unfavorable Environments: Lessons From Research on Successful Children,” *American Psychologist* 53, no. 2 (1998): 206.

<sup>137</sup> Masten and Coatsworth, “The Development of Competence in Favorable and Unfavorable Environments,” 212.

can foster “metacognitive knowledge”<sup>138</sup> that will allow students to recognize the processes at work in encountering adversity and overcoming it. Just as Schön’s metaphor of encountering a puzzle allowed professionals to practice reflection as they addressed it, Boekaerts also emphasizes purposeful reflection. She writes, “I do not deny that a stressor causes a state of imbalance or incongruence in the information processing system, but I believe that the present coping models do not adequately address *intentionality*.”<sup>139</sup> Boekaerts seeks to articulate “adequate coping models”<sup>140</sup> and encourages teachers to consider including them in their repertoire of models and strategies for fostering reflection in students. She focuses on students’ interior lives, highlighting how reflection connects to resilience. She writes,

I [propose] that successful adaptation to stressful episodes, particularly in transition periods, requires students to achieve a fit between changing physical and social environments and their internal environment. The internal environment includes the students’ perception of self, their goal structure, values, motives, and beliefs, but also their capacity to represent a stressor mentally and their ability to select from the repertoire of coping scripts those that best fit their coping goal, given the perceived situational demands.<sup>141</sup>

Given the positive, supporting benefits of prosocial relationships with others, it makes sense that sharing “coping scripts” might be a way for students to learn from one another and practice additional ways of coping. There are other possibilities for practice here—

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<sup>138</sup> Monique Boekaerts, “Coping in Context: Goal Frustration and Goal Ambivalence in Relation to Academic and Interpersonal Goals,” in *Learning to Cope: Developing as a Person in Complex Societies*, ed. Erica Frydenberg (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1999), 187.

<sup>139</sup> Boekaerts, “Coping in Context,” 175. Emphasis original.

<sup>140</sup> Boekaerts, “Coping in Context,” 176.

<sup>141</sup> Boekaerts, “Coping in Context,” 176.

perception of one's self and "perceived situational demands" can both be opened to self reflection, re-consideration, application of new possibilities (we can imagine here use of narrative pedagogy), and practice with new responses here—are rich. As Boekaerts puts it,

The outcome of this reflection process [on the source of the difficulty and the amount of effort needed to solve the problem] is the choice of a coping strategy. When these students consider it meaningful to invest resources, they will continue striving, investing effort to adapt the plan so that it fits local conditions.<sup>142</sup>

The idea that meaning outweighs stress could be especially constructive when considering how to frame the dissonance that arises in interfaith encounters. Educators can capitalize on the intrinsic investment of effort students bring to experiences they consider meaningful and meet them with practices that make students' coping most beneficial. One can imagine, for example, the inclusion of an "encountering and solving disruptive puzzles" in inter-religious courses or programs. Facilitators could name and make explicit some common reactions, as well as coach practice sessions (microteaching or micropractice) where students articulate their processes and share with one another.

Boekaerts suggests the kind of questions facilitators might use. While she is thinking particularly of "stressors" and "coping goals," we can imagine the usefulness of such facilitation in inter-religious education settings. Boekaerts writes,

Teachers should be given training in raising and answering a set of associated questions. These include: What are the objective characteristics of this stressor?; Did you interpret the stressor correctly?; What is your coping goal?; Did you select a coping strategy in accordance with your coping goal? These and similar questions may help students to think about their coping attempts and to explore different coping responses and their

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<sup>142</sup> Boekaerts, "Coping in Context," 187.

effect. In addition, students may be willing to compare and contrast their own coping strategies with those of peers. Coping strategies that others use and prove to be effective in a particular context, yet do not violate the students' personal values (higher order goals), may swiftly be incorporated into his or her coping repertoire, whereas strategies that are deemed effective by somebody else, but prove to be cumbersome, embarrassing, or unacceptable, may be foregone.<sup>143</sup>

Boekaerts's description of how a teacher might facilitate reflection and sharing of strategies fits well in religious education settings, and aligns reflective practice with resilience. And so, we've come full circle, beginning with reflective practice, moving across the historical development of the field of resilience research, and beginning to consider how the two areas might work together in inter-religious education settings. Our next step in identifying whether or not these are essential ingredients in inter-religious learning will include research with practitioners.

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<sup>143</sup> Boekaerts, "Coping in Context," 194.

## Chapter 5: Methodology

### Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology behind this research project is explored. These issues include the research design, qualitative research and grounded theory, the context of the study, procedures and data collection, the research process, and validity and dependability.

### Research Design

The design of this research intentionally grows out of an understanding and appreciation of inter-religious education as a field. While religious education, comparative theology, and religious studies are all established fields, the area of inter-religious education—or even inter-religious studies—is relatively new. In 2004, Judith Berling wrote *Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education*. In it, she traces her own trajectory in understanding the need for her teaching to become mindful of inter-religious differences. Berling details what learning other religions should entail, and delineates the kinds of assignments and processes that support inter-religious education. The understanding of “inter-religious education” in this study closely mirrors—and is indebted to—hers. Berling begins by noting the need for openness to difference, writing, “A learner’s tentative and initial understanding of a religion must be subject to correction by the specific texts, terms, and distinctive perspectives of the religion. That requires attention to and respect for difference.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds*, 40.

Berling is describing the knowledge and provisional understandings that learners either bring with them, or learn early in their inter-religious education. Note that Berling, as a teacher and as a writer, takes great care to track how we learn.

This attention to the learner is central to inter-religious education as one sees it as developing from the work of religious educators and interfaith activists and practitioners. Whereas comparative theologians might situate their own confessional natures within their wider research, learning about and comparing other theologies remains central. In contrast, as inter-religious education developed—and from the very beginning—focus on the learner as co-meaning maker was important to those shaping the field. While comparative theologians definitely benefit from reflecting upon the teaching-learning experience, in inter-religious education as an emerging field, the focus on the learner is primary.

This posture of learning became central to the design and intentions of this research, and led to the use of both qualitative research and grounded theories as two models that would allow for shared meaning-making between the researcher and interview participants. In addition, in this form of research particularly as well as in the fields of practical theology and education generally, the researcher herself is never completely obscured. Preeminent practical/pastoral theologian March Clark Moschella describes the position a researcher in these fields must take. In her *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*, Moschella writes,

Researchers know that our lenses of analysis and our categories are cultural projects, too. Like the people we study, we live in complex worlds of meaning and construct our stories and conceptual categories using the tools we find at hand. We cannot stand outside of a culture in order to

study it...At the point when ethnographers ‘write up’ their narratives, interpreting data, building arguments, and formulating conclusions, the author’s voice in the narrative is especially pronounced. There is no getting away from the reality that ethnography is a theory-laden endeavor that reflects the categories and presuppositions of the researcher.<sup>145</sup>

While this research is not strictly ethnographic, a similar ethos is present. That is, the researcher is in relationship with both the interview participants and with the data; she must occasionally situate herself and note her relationship to findings as they emerge from the data.

### Qualitative Research

This study uses qualitative research in the form of grounded theory, through a series of interviews with educators and practitioners. Qualitative research seeks to understand reality and understanding human endeavors that might be more difficult to capture using quantitative research. This study seeks to understand which capacities are best for and fostered by inter-religious learning, and to do that, it draws upon the experience and reflection of active practitioners in the field.

The design of the study sought to establish a pattern of listening, reflecting, listening and confirming, and checking for the validity of created meaning. As Wertz and his colleagues note in *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, including “the full range of personal human expression...[can] provide very different types of information than the measurement of external events.”<sup>146</sup> That is, the initial interviews sought to capture a full range of possible experiences in teaching and learning. After the first set of interviews,

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<sup>145</sup> Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*, 27-29.

<sup>146</sup> Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, 89.

and until the end of the study, artifacts were collected, examined, coded, and reflected upon to build and validate meaning. The second set of interviews sought to clarify and confirm operationalized definitions of capacities. The final portion of the study, a short survey, provided additional support of the emerged understanding of the capacities.

Wertz confirms this iterative process, noting (by way of Wetherell), “interpretations are understood in terms of, and placed in a description of, background normative conceptions deemed relevant by the analyst...the focus of the investigation can change many times throughout the analysis...and one’s analysis is never complete.”<sup>147</sup> In this sense, qualitative research supported a posture of openness and a focus on the experiences of the learner; these are aspects that echo the commitments of inter-religious teaching and learning.

As this is an emerging field, there are fewer practitioners who have been teaching in explicit inter-religious contexts for long periods of time. In addition, the academic field has also been informed by interfaith activists and program developers. For these reasons, this study sought to hear both from formal instructors in classroom settings and from program facilitators. In addition, the research with participants was arranged to utilize the longer-term experience of those with more experience first. Their impressions and data from their interviews helped shape the next tier of questions and research, with practitioners and educators with fewer years of experience. Both tiers of interviews informed the clarification and formal operationalization of the final definitions of “resilience” and “reflective practice” in this study, and in turn informed both the questions in the final short survey and the audience of respondents for the survey.

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<sup>147</sup> Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, 208.



The research questions were developed based on responsiveness to the current fields of religious and inter-religious education, to the researcher's professional knowledge of teaching and learning, and in collaboration with other advisors in the field. Simply put, the initial questions sought to capture "what is happening" in inter-religious learning settings, and sought to prompt educators and facilitators to think about the learning capacities they are trying to foster, and when and how these are exemplified in their students.

Through the researcher's own professional connections, and after a survey of the field of those teaching inter-religiously, the researcher identified more than thirty current professors, instructors, leaders, and practitioners in inter-religious education. 24 initial interviews to participate were sent, with 23 potential respondents expressing a willingness to participate in the research project.<sup>148</sup> Research began with a practice interview session with a long-time inter-religious educator and leader; this allowed for testing of the questions and tightening of the language, as well as re-ordering of the questions and reconsidering the focus of some parts of the interview.

Then, ten interview participants—four men and five women—were identified and initial interviews were scheduled with each. Of the ten, seven identify as Christian, one as Jewish,<sup>149</sup> one as Muslim, and one as Hindu. Four work at private research universities, two at Protestant theological schools, two at Protestant seminaries, one at a large Roman

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<sup>148</sup> The initial invitation and summary of the research project can be found in Appendix D.

<sup>149</sup> The interview participant for the practice interview session is also Jewish; his experiences shaped the development of later questions but findings from his interview are not presented in this study.

Catholic university, and one at a large public university. Only three are ordained; only one actively serves as a minister in her denomination (one is ordained but does not teach in that capacity, one is ordained but no longer in relationship with his denomination.) (For three of the women, ordination is not an option in their tradition.) Several work in multiple contexts in higher education, even for multiple universities or colleges. Their own professional hybridity echoes the personal religious hybridity of their students and participants, which provides a fruitful space to capture potential capacities in the interviews.

Ten initial hour-long interviews were conducted by telephone over a three-week period. The researcher knew personally all ten interview participants and had met with all of them in person in the years preceding this research. For those reasons, interviewing by telephone did not create the kind of obstacle that “cold” interviewing by telephone might. The researcher used transcriptions and qualitative research software (MAXQDA11)<sup>150</sup> to read iteratively for codes, themes, and the beginning of a theory. Early themes were the basis for memos, bracketing, and new lens with which to continue to read the transcripts.

A second set of interview questions was created for follow up with the nine final interview participants, in response to the new data created by the coding process. Then, nine hour-long second-round interviews were conducted with the same participants. Early operationalized definitions of “resilience” and “reflective practice” were shared for memo-checking, and specific examples of students or participants exemplifying (or not) these capacities were sought. Further, interview participants were invited to reflect on

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<sup>150</sup> Information about this tool can be found at <http://www.maxqda.com/>, last accessed October 14, 2014.

whether or not these capacities were present in their own teaching and learning practice. Interview participants were deliberately and explicitly invited to engage in self-reflection because such reflection is a key aspect of inter-religious teaching and learning, and borrows from two founders in the field, Mary Boys and Sara Lee.

Boys and Lee both explain how they came to teach inter-religiously as they share the models for teaching that brought them to their newfound conclusions about inter-religious education. *Christians and Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other* was published in 2006, but Boys and Lee trace their endeavor as beginning in the early 1990s. Just as Berling uses her attention to the needs of learners to build her guide for inter-religious education, Boys and Lee also focus on the needs of learners and build upon their reflective practice, starting with their teaching aims. They describe the reflective practice<sup>151</sup> that guides the way they design curricula, seek participant feedback, and incorporate feedback into future curricula. They write:

Over the course of collaborating on papers for the Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education (APRRE) and our mutual interest in building bridges between our two traditions through education, we developed some preliminary ideas about bringing together Catholic and Jewish educators...[the Catholic-Jewish Colloquium] grew organically, as each session in turn suggested the next...we identified important principles about interreligious learning, but these principles emerged in the process of our retrospective analysis...<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Because reflective practice is one capacity examined in this research project, models for inter-religious education generally that used this practice were particularly appealing.

<sup>152</sup> Mary C. Boys and Sara S. Lee, *Christians and Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2006), 64-65.

The models and reflections shared by Boys and Lee continue to be useful for inter-religious educators; indeed, their model of responding to the growth and feedback from their students has become a part of inter-religious education as well. While all good teaching and learning incorporate responsiveness to student growth and feedback, inter-religious education depends upon it because no one instructor can be the sole teacher of all content. Indeed, much of the traditional content will come from the participants/learners, so this model of responsiveness is key. Boys and Lee articulate how they began to make the move from working in religious education to building the conversations that would become the backbone of this work. They note,

we shared a particular point of view as educators. A passion for the work of religious education, common principles about teaching and learning, insights into religious formation, and a sensitivity to principles about adult learning shaped our thinking.<sup>153</sup>

In a way, these foremothers of inter-religious education themselves model a kind of qualitative engagement with their field. Using qualitative research to continue the learning process about this field continues both their spirit and commitment.

## Methodology

This study follows the contours of grounded theory research in moving from a nascent theory, through data collection and analysis, and into the final generation of a tenable theory. In “A Constructivist Grounded Theory Analysis of Losing and Regaining a Valued Self,” in *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, Kathy Charmaz identifies the connection between the researcher’s posture of reflection and the methodology’s commitment to constructivism; she writes, “Engaging in reflexivity and assuming

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<sup>153</sup> Boys and Lee, *Christians and Jews in Dialogue*, 64-65.

relativity aids us in recognizing multiple realities, positions, and standpoints—and how they shift during the research process for both the researcher and the research participants.”<sup>154</sup> The purpose of this methodology is not to verify an existing theory, but to follow the form of the approach, leading to the development of a new way of understanding.

### Grounded Theory

In “A Constructivist Grounded Theory Analysis of Losing and Regaining a Valued Self,” in *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, Charmaz, continues, noting that grounded theory provides “flexible guidelines”<sup>155</sup> for researchers to “stay involved”<sup>156</sup> with their projects. Charmaz writes, “using grounded theory guidelines keeps us interacting with our data and nascent theories by involving us in comparative analysis and writing each step along our research journey.”<sup>157</sup> This posture of constant comparison and mindfulness to the *development* of ideas along a journey suits the particular research questions of this study. That is, because this study seeks to understand if and how certain capacities for learning are fostered in inter-religious educational settings, and in an emerging field, from practitioners who themselves have both contributed to a new field and spent a great deal of time reflecting on their work, grounded theory provides a phenomenological method to query those concepts allowing question and answering to resonate with one another. Throughout this research,

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<sup>154</sup> Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, 169.

<sup>155</sup> Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, 165.

<sup>156</sup> Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, 165.

<sup>157</sup> Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, 166.

subsequent data collection continued to inform the first-tentative theoretical categories. Precision developed over time, as coding, memo-checking, and more refined questions allowed for more sophisticated analysis of the data.

### Role of Researcher and Philosophical Sensitivity

In *Basics of Qualitative Research*, Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss identify a set of characteristics that typify researchers who best benefit from qualitative research. They note that these characteristics include,

A humanistic bent, curiosity, creativity and imagination, a sense of logic, the ability to recognize diversity as well as regularity, a willingness to take risks, the ability to live with ambiguity, the ability to work through problems in the field, an acceptance of the self as a research instrument, [and] trust in the self and the ability to see value in the work that is produced.<sup>158</sup>

These characteristics resonated with both the researcher and with the matter of research. In addition, the researcher's earlier degree and practice in secondary education provided a backdrop of experience in educational theory, developmental psychology, and constructivism. These both led to an interest in capacities developed by inter-religious education and in the methodology of research for this project. Finally, the researcher chose for interview participants inter-religious practitioners with which she already had a relationship of mutual learning and exploration; this history of collaboration helped ensure that the time spent in interviews would be richest.

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<sup>158</sup> Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications), 13.

## Theoretical Sensitivity

In this study, sources of theoretical sensitivity include understanding and responsiveness to the literature, the researcher's personal and professional experience, and commitment to the analytic process. As Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss put it in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, "Once started, theoretical sensitivity is forever in continual development...the sociologist should...be sufficiently theoretically sensitive so that [s]he can conceptualize and formulate a theory as it emerges from the data."<sup>159</sup> Although the literature on reflection and reflective practice in religious education is substantial, there are fewer sources connecting reflective practice to inter-religious dialogue. Similarly, researchers have occasionally connected individuals' religious life to their resiliency, but no one has yet explored resilience as a capacity for or fostered by inter-religious engagement. In this study, the literature review serves to give us a broad understanding of four areas, including: developmental psychology, education, religious education, and the emergence of reflective practice from professional development into a practice adopted in other disciplines.

The researcher's professional and personal experience in education and in inter-religious dialogue and leadership informed the initial research design, interview questions, and methodological frame. The analytical process is one of iterative questioning, responsiveness, and attention to the details of emerging themes. Some limitations of this study include both the researcher's and the field's focus, in North

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<sup>159</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1967), 46.

America, on Western, Protestant-centric models for inter-religious engagement. In addition, many of the interview participants teach and lead from intersections or interdisciplinary locations—in one part of their lives, for example, they serve as chaplains from their own confessional standpoint but lead interfaith student groups, while in other parts they teach undergraduate religious studies courses. Neither of these contexts is strictly speaking “inter-religious education,” but work in each informs their understanding of the latter.

### Context of the Study

For exploring teaching and learning in inter-religious settings, the researcher determined that she should draw upon the experience of instructors and leaders in higher education settings; their experience teaching and facilitating was needed to answer the research question. In addition, some of their teaching materials (syllabi, program or institutional mission statements, statements of purpose) could be used as artifacts to add richness and validity as the theory emerged. Finally, in the latter portion of the research interviews, a survey instrument was developed and used with additional participants as a way of validating the language and theories developed throughout the study. The researcher did not necessarily have proximity to the interview participants’ locations; of the ten initial, only one participant lives in Southern California, where the researcher is located. However, the geographical and institutional variety of the participants’ contexts enables the results of the study to be widely applicable.



## Population

The population of interest for this study is teachers and facilitators in inter-religious settings. “Inter-religious” is the term used in this study; other terms including “interfaith education,” “interfaith engagement,” “inter-religious leadership,” “inter-religious understanding,” “comparative religions,” “comparative theologies,” and “multireligious education” are used by the interview participants. In the context of this research, religious education seeks to develop methods and techniques for participants to query questions of faith and spirituality, and which then leads to participants growing and becoming transformed. Thus, it follows that *inter-religious* education seeks to allow for spaces where participants from different faith traditions (or religious traditions, or ethical commitments) come together for learning, for dialogue, and for mutual enrichment. The researcher’s ideas about education draw heavily upon constructivist practices, and so inter-religious education must also allow for participants to share their perspectives and wisdom, co-creating meaning and purpose. An inter-religious educator will be a facilitator, shepherd, coach, or co-learner, but will not be teaching content...because the content of inter-religious education comes, by necessity, from and through those engaging in it.

Judith Berling, a comparative theologian by training, was one of the first in this field to use the term “interreligious education.” Because Berling has named her endeavor in the text “a guide for interreligious education,” her guidelines for what this entails are worth citing in full. Berling notes,

Learning other religions in a diverse world entails:

Building on the diversity of learners' experiences while respecting the internal diversity and multiple perspectives of religions studied,

Empowering learners by developing voice and agency while also teaching them to respect the voices and agencies of those whom they engage in study,

Entering other worlds through art, text, or narrative so that learners engage difference and particularity while acknowledging their own and others' social locations,

Engaging understanding and interpretation of the distinctive ways in which religions represent themselves, and not merely the mastery of ungrounded information,

Developing linguistic flexibility through a mutually critical conversation that engages the languages of all participants, including those of the religions studied, [and]

Establishing mutually respectful relationships, learning to stand with others.<sup>160</sup>

Berling does two things at once in this description. First, she is hinting at “student learning outcomes” that must be present—or at least held in the mind of the educator as aims—for inter-religious learning to take place. Second, she is modeling how educators can make the leap from thinking about good teaching practice to practices that foster inter-religious education in particular. In the population of interest for this study, Berling's work has been instrumental; all interview participants are familiar with her seminal text and with her definition of “interreligious education;” many were similarly interested in understanding the learning outcomes for their students or participants.

### Sampling

In *Grounding Grounded Theory: Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry*, Ian Dey notes, “Since the aim [in grounded theory] is to generate theory, rather than to apply it to

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<sup>160</sup> Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds*, 47-48.

particular agencies or populations, we need not be unduly concerned with random sampling or similar procedures designed to provide a firm basis for generalization.”<sup>161</sup>

Instead, the aim of sampling in this study is to reach saturation; that is, interviews are conducted and iterative reading and coding of the transcripts and artifacts continue until no new additions to the emerging theory arises. This study seeks to conceptualize and concretize two specific capacities in inter-religious education, and the research portion ends with memo-checking with participants and a survey given to an even wider audience to provide validity and confirmation to the capacities and theories expounded herein.

Many of the interview participants mentioned elements of their own reflective practice during the interviews; in a sense, their own searching and confirmation in the shared question, “what does it mean to teach and learn inter-religiously?” gave this study a kind of nesting doll schema of investigation. That is, the interview participants are informally investigating the questions raised by this study on their own; the formal inquiry of the research interviews merely surfaced and captured existing reflection and evidence.

In terms of sample size, there was no predetermined rule; at the point saturation was reached, the sample used for interviewing in this study contained nine-ten participants and was found to be sufficient for the purpose of this study. The survey was sent to 25 initial possible participants; 17 of those participants participated, offering feedback and validity to the data by way of the survey instrument.

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<sup>161</sup> Ian Dey, *Grounding Grounded Theory: Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1999), 38.

## Operationalization

Interviews were used as the primary means of collecting data. Understanding the capacities involved in inter-religious teaching and learning involves studying phenomena that are not necessarily directly measurable (at least, not initially, as capacities in inter-religious learning are a new area of consideration in a new field.) And so, this study began with concepts of “inter-religious education,” “resilience,” and “reflective practice” and sought to engage with interview participants and artifacts that allow us to operationalize these concepts and then make specific recommendations for both teaching and further study.

The formal data collection for this study spanned a period of five months, from October 2014 to February 2015. The researcher’s experience in teaching and in working with the interview participants in other contexts allowed her to utilize rapport with them and allowed her to best understand emerging ideas that began to come from even the most initial conversations.

## Purposive and Theoretical Sampling

An initial group of 24 potential participants was identified, of which ten interview subjects were chosen. The researcher interviewed active instructors and facilitators over the phone and allowed for collaboration and shared meaning making. With coding, data analysis, artifact consideration, and the use of the survey after operationalization, the researcher was able to create a rich description of the phenomenon and then return to the interview participants and the survey results to confirm the emerging theory. Nine participants were interviewed twice as well as invited to participate in the survey, which

was also shared with all 24 original potential participants. In this way, validity was supported by beginning with educators and practitioners who had the most experience in the field and then including a wider pool of instructors and leaders in inter-religious education and related fields.

### Population and Criteria

Although the researcher lives in Southern California, she had worked professionally in the field of inter-religious dialogue and leadership in New York and Boston, and has professional and educational contexts through an online academic journal with inter-religious educators and leaders throughout the United States. All interview participants work in higher education or with adult professionals, including undergraduate students, graduate students, students studying to become Christian ministers or rabbis, or professionals seeking interfaith skills in their professional contexts.

Participants fell into two categories: first, those who have been educating or facilitating programs in inter-religious settings or with inter-religious content for more than five years. In the second category, participants had experience for fewer than five years. After the first round of interviews, a third category was introduced; in this third tier, or participation in the survey, participants could have worked in any amount of time, or in slightly more varied settings, in the field. This use of categories and tiers served two purposes related to validation and reflection.

First, keeping the level of participants' experience in mind during the reflection, coding, and theming process allowed for their statements to be thrown into relief, which accentuated some aspects of their experiences. For example, in the first set of one-hour

interviews, the first interview was with an academic and facilitator who has been doing specifically inter-religious work for more than twenty years. This conversation was followed with an emerging inter-religious leader, someone with a great deal of recent experience and commitment, but with fewer years teaching and working in the field.

Because the experiences of these two practitioners were markedly different, the differences in their answers to the same questions provoked an amplification in reflection and nuanced understanding. For example, one question in the first interview asked participants if they were ever surprised by student success or failure. The interview participant with the least amount of teaching experience found this a fruitful question and reflected on times when encounters with students and their successes have surprised her. In contrast, an interview participant who has been teaching in higher education for more than twenty years answered that he was not surprised, anymore, but used the word “gratified” to describe how he saw his students’ struggles and successes. Interesting and informative differences such as these kept patterns of coding and meaning-making sharp and refreshed.

Finally, the survey instrument was designed after all ten first round interviews were completed, and shared with a wider group of potential participants (more religiously diverse than the interview participants, and with potential participants in a wider variety of professional settings.) The survey instrument invited testing and verification of the emerging theory and operationalized concepts from a wider field of participants.

## Data Collection

In grounded theory, constant comparative analysis with existing data and newly emerging data allow for growing relevance, and in fact provides direction to continued collection. As Dey puts it, “what [matters] most in sampling [is] whether new data sources would offer interesting comparisons in terms of the processes being studied.”<sup>162</sup> Throughout the reading and listening process, as ideas became more focused, data collection became increasingly structured until saturation was reached. The researcher spent time re-reading and seeking initial codes after every single interview; her intent was to avoid conducting all interviews before beginning the analyzing process. This allowed her to use emerging concepts from early interviews in later conversations, and to allow the interview data to inform consideration of artifacts. The interviews were recording using a software application for smartphone that corresponded with the transcription service, known as No Notes. The interview protocols for both interviews are shared in Appendices D, E, and F. Interviews, field notes, artifact collection, memos, and a survey served as data collection instruments.

## Interviews

Before embarking on the initial interviews, one pilot interview was conducted to give the researcher a chance to practice the interview protocol, gain feedback from the pilot participant, and reflect upon the protocol, questions, and process. The interview questions were open-ended, and were asked in the same order in each interview. Each interview began with a chance for the interview participants to ask questions, and

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<sup>162</sup> Dey, *Grounding Grounded Theory*, 5.

provided a short time for the researcher and participants to “catch up” on one another’s work and lives.

The interview participants were asked to talk about their contexts, their own terms if they did not use the term “inter-religious education,” and about their teaching or facilitation experience in higher education settings, or settings with adult learners. Questions about learning outcomes and capacities in their students or participants were asked, but not until the second interviews were the concepts “resilience” or “reflective practice” investigated. Occasionally, interview participants asked the researcher for an example of what she meant; when this happened, the researcher tried to use the same example in each case. For example, in the question, “describe a time when you have seen a student or participant exemplify inter-religious learning,” some interview participants asked, “Tell me what you mean by ‘exemplify.’” The researcher did not want to remove the question in the middle of the process, so when asked for clarification, she used an example from her own teaching about students learning perspective taking practice, and the kind of work those students would demonstrate if they exemplified having that skill.

To create the questions for the first series of interviews, the researcher used the literature review, consultation with her adviser, an expert in the field, and informal interviews with other practitioners in inter-religious education. Within the open-ended questions, interview participants were asked to describe the kinds of teaching or facilitation they did, to share their experience and capture the ideas and terms they used to describe their work. Each interview lasted one hour, and was buttressed on both ends by e-mail correspondence. The interviews were spaced apart to allow for time reflecting and to begin analysis. During and immediately after the interviews, the researcher



developed field notes. The transcripts were also annotated throughout the process. Examples of field notes and annotated transcripts are provided in Appendix H. Then, transcripts were uploaded into the qualitative data analysis software tool and the researcher read and re-read, marking themes and creating codes—these led to the initial themes which were continuously analyzed and documented.

In the second set of interviews, participants were first updated on the research process and asked if they had any questions or thoughts before moving forward. Then, participants were asked questions in three areas; first, they were asked to elaborate on themes or examples from their first interview. Second, they were asked questions that had emerged from the new body of data; finally, they were asked specifically about resilience and reflective practice, and whether or not these capacities are apparent or essential in their work. Before each second interview, the researcher reviewed the themes and codes that were most pertinent from the first interview, and highlighted sections that would benefit from elaboration or clarification. Often, the question was phrased in a way that included original content from the first interview. For example, in one second-round interview, the participant was asked,

In describing what you hope your students are able to do, you described reading Job—and how they were surprised that what they are reading is different. You also said, for example, ‘I try to use writing that for them to read that will provoke questions,’ and ‘I try to use [the readings and assignments] to raise questions,’ and ‘...these are all brand new texts to them...so there’s also lots of fear, I think in the classroom. And then, but they are all surprised when they read it, that it’s different from what they were expecting.’ Tell me more about why you value the ability to question

in your students, in your self, and how you intentionally set about raising questions in class.’<sup>163</sup>

In this way, “tell me more” followed examples from the first interview, inviting the interview participants to clarify, elaborate, or provide further connections between the original question and their experience.

In addition, analysis of the data from the first interviews surfaced a question about what “safe” means when applied to a classroom space—does it mean that no dissonance takes place? And so, in the second interviews, interview participants were asked to speak to this question, and talk about how they discerned “good questions” that evoked dissonance that led to growth from “harmful” provoking that led to students withdrawing or reacting adversely. Finally, the same definitions for dissonance, resilience, and reflective practice were shared with all participants and each was given the opportunity to reflect on whether or not these capacities are meaningful to them and their teaching practice.

All participants received the Informed Consent Form in connection with their first interviews, as well as an attachment that outlined the non-disclosure agreement between No Notes (the recording and transcription service) and the researcher. The Informed Consent Form, attachment, IRB proposal, and IRB approval can be found in Appendices A, B, and C.

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<sup>163</sup> Appendix F contains the interview protocol for the second interviews; the content of examples used to prompt clarification or reflection necessarily changes for each interview participant.

## Data Analysis and Researcher Interaction with the Data

After each interview, data analysis began with field notes, and then with readings of the transcriptions. Using MAXQDA, the researcher identified codes and then developed categories. As categories emerged, the researcher re-read field notes and the transcripts to continue analysis, solidify definitions, and create preliminary theories that further iterations of analysis could query. The examination of themes and categories became a daily practice, and enabled the researcher to listen and take field notes in subsequent interviews with ever-growing sensitivity and reflexivity. Open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and memo writing both supported emerging themes and revealed gaps in the theory—which led to the creation of questions for the second series of interview and the final survey.

In seeking to uncover a central category, the researcher depended upon the following techniques as urged by Corbin and Strauss, including, “writing the story line,” “moving from the descriptive story to the theoretical explanation,” “the use of integrative diagrams,” and “reviewing and sorting through memos.”<sup>164</sup> Corbin and Strauss’s metaphor of “story” enabled the researcher to listen for themes and carrying that metaphor into the practice of writing and reviewing field notes allowed her to avoid foreclosing early with under-developed themes or categories.

## Researcher Ethics

Because data collection involved human subjects, the study required approval from the Institutional Review Board of Claremont School of Theology (Appendix B).

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<sup>164</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 106-109.

The confidentiality of the interview transcripts and data was ensured and maintained, and the interview participants were given anonymity. Further, the researcher maintained that in the drafting and revision process, interview participants could request that certain quotes could be removed. While none of the questions were intended to prompt upsetting or personal information, reflecting upon one's faith, religious or ethical practice, and work has the potential to lead to reflection that might be upsetting.

No Notes was chosen as a recording and transcription in part because of that organization's experience working with academic researchers and Institutional Review Boards. Their non-disclosure agreement provided assurances of the security of the data and confidentiality of the research participants. Participation was voluntary and no monetary compensation was offered, although the researcher did send hand-written notes of gratitude after each encounter, and shared her research and drafts of the study willingly and in gratitude for the participants' contributions to the study.

Corbin and Strauss reaffirm a set of criteria they originally constructed in 1990 when helping researchers evaluate the credibility of research. Their criteria include:

How was the original sample selected? [...] What major categories emerged? What were some of the events, incidents, and/or actions (indicators) that pointed to some of these major categories? [...] After the theoretical sampling was done, how representative did the categories prove to be of the data? What were some of the relationships made during the analysis and on what grounds were they formulated and validated? Where there instances when statements of relationships did not explain what was happening in the data (negative cases)? How were these discrepancies accounted for? Were statements of relationships modified? How and why was the core category (if applicable) selected? [...] Are the concepts systematically related? [...] Is variation built into the theory? [...] Has process been taken into account? [...] Do the theoretical findings seem significant, and to what extent? [...] Do the findings become part of

the discussions and ideas exchanged among relevant social and professional groups?<sup>165</sup>

These questions became guideposts for specific stages of reflection and analysis during the research process. In addition, identifying these criteria before research began enabled the researcher to seek questions and research processes that would lead to a robust theory.

In addition, the study included built in mechanisms to create, test for, and ensure validity and replicability. In the interview pilot, the pilot interview participant provided feedback on the questions; even his uncertainty or inability to understand certain phrases or questions led to fruitful revisions. The second set of interview questions was not created until after the first stage of research, and after the constant comparison process for which grounded theory calls. In a third stage of research, a survey instrument was designed, led by and in consultation with data analysis. Finally, all interview participants continued the research conversation throughout by sharing and commenting upon artifacts, by giving feedback on the theories as they emerged, and by making connections for the recommendations of this study to their own work.

Finally, the practical application of final findings was itself the impetus for this study. Educators seek to understand which capacities are fostered by various learning settings, and how to capture and replicate them, in all forms of education. The literature review, interview questions, and survey instrument were all designed with replicability in future inter-religious endeavors in mind. In this sense, “transferability” was not a notion that was hoisted back onto the study retrospectively; it was part of the intention of the research all along.

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<sup>165</sup> Corbin and Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 307-309.

## Summary

This chapter provided insight into the methodology behind the study. The research design was discussed, including the researcher's and the field's commitment to the learner, as well as how foremothers in the field of inter-religious education provided models for research, teaching, and learning that make qualitative research and grounded theory good fits for this study. The context of the study was described, including a definition of "inter-religious education" and how the researcher came to use that particular term. Finally, the research process was detailed, including the design, the interview process, and issues of validity, dependability, and transferability.

## Chapter 6: Research Findings

### Introduction

This chapter will review the study's purpose statement, research questions, studied population, and methods. Then, the research findings—including themes, patterns, examples, outliers, and issues of validity and reliability—will be presented, along with examples from the interviews and artifacts. Codes that emerged will be reviewed, and the summary of this chapter will link directly with the final chapter, recommendations to the field and for further study.

### Purpose Statement, Methodology, Sample

The purpose of this study is to examine key practices for inter-religious learning, particularly resilience and reflective practice. Earlier research on reflective practice has focused on professionals including teachers, those in healthcare, managers, coaches, and therapists—fewer studies have considered how learners themselves might benefit from reflective practice. Similarly, previous research on resilience began with “vulnerable” populations of children, and then moved to examining children, adults, and communities having experienced trauma. Psychologists, social scientists, and educators studying resilience have recently made the move to consider resilience a positive attribute for singular study, instead of something that is examined within a traumatic context. No one has yet attempted to understand whether and how resilience and reflective practice might be key competencies in inter-religious education, and whether and how they might be intentionally fostered and taught by inter-religious educators.

Supporting research questions in this study include: What is the relationship between resiliency, reflective practice, and inter-religious learning? How do these two competencies develop in inter-religious learning? What are noteworthy events in the process? What facilitates the learning? What hinders the learning? Who are the key participants in facilitating this learning, and what are their roles?

Regarding the goals of inter-religious education, additional questions include: How can we describe the goals of inter-religious education (IRE)? How do educators articulate the value of IRE for students? What can participants learn through IRE? What capacities does IRE foster? What capacities are necessary for IRE to take place?

While general and Christian religious educators have utilized reflective practice (in the latter case, often through narrative pedagogy), it has not yet been included or studied as a possible competency in inter-religious education. Similarly, resiliency as a capacity has not been explored enough in either religious or inter-religious education. However, inter-religious engagement, with its intentional brushes with alterity, often brings about dissonance or places of initial trepidation or discomfort. For this reason, it is possible that direct instruction, modeling, and fostering both reflective practice and resilience as educational capacities directly related to inter-religious learning might benefit students and the field as a whole.

This study also posits that reflective practice and resilience might be related. If this is the case, then inter-religious educators, leaders, and program designers can, with confidence, include them as key capacities that both support inter-religious learning and allow it to bloom.



## Interview Participants and Methods

Qualitative research, with grounded theory, were natural methodological tools for this study because they themselves represent both postures of reflection and the kind of collaborative meaning-making intrinsic in good religious and inter-religious education. The study design incorporated patterns of listening, reflection, listening, confirming, and checking for the validity of the emerging meaning. Two sets of interviews with educators and practitioners, and a period of study with artifacts, and a final short survey instrument shared with a wider audience, were scaffolded so that the most rich information could come from first more experienced educators, and a cascade of checks for validity and reliability could be used.

Of the ten initial interview participants, seven identify as Christian, one as Jewish, one as Muslim, and one as Hindu. Four work at private research universities, two at Protestant theological schools, two at Protestant seminaries, one at a large Roman Catholic university, and one at a large public university. For many, their straddles multiple contexts—for example, two women work in both academic settings and in chapel or chaplaincy settings in their universities. They spoke of wearing multiple hats and even of speaking different languages to different audiences or sets of colleagues. This is not unusual in inter-religious settings, even in the inter-religious field as a profession or guild; a kind of transdisciplinarity or hybridity often characterizes both the participants and the postures necessary to travel and live in this context.

Ten initial hour-long interviews were conducted by telephone over a three-week period. The researcher knew personally all ten interview participants and had met with

all of them in person in the years preceding this research. The researcher used transcriptions and qualitative research software (MAXQDA11)<sup>166</sup> to read iteratively for codes, themes, and the beginning of a theory. Early themes were the basis for memos, bracketing, and new lens with which to continue to read the transcripts.

A second set of interview questions was created for follow up with the nine interview participants, in response to the new data created by the coding process. Then, nine hour-long second-round interviews were conducted with the same participants. Early operationalized definitions of “resilience” and “reflective practice” were shared for memo-checking, and specific examples of students of facilitators exemplifying (or not) these capacities was sought. The formal data collection for this study spanned a period of five months, from October 2014 to February 2015. In addition, themes that emerged in the first set of interviews were allowed to develop and take shape as themes for examination in the reflective process used with the artifacts.

All interview participants work in higher education or with adult professionals, including undergraduate students, graduate students, students studying to become Christian ministers or rabbis, or professionals seeking interfaith skills in their professional contexts. Participants were selected in two tiers: first, those who have been educating or facilitating programs in inter-religious settings or with inter-religious content for more than five years. In the second tier of participants, they were selected because of their experience for fewer than five years. In the third tier, or participation in the survey, participants could have worked in any amount of time in the field.

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<sup>166</sup> Information about this tool can be found at <http://www.maxqda.com/>, last accessed October 14, 2014.

## Data Emerged and Confirmed

The initial interviews asked questions about participants' context, the language they used to describe their endeavors, their participants or students, challenges to inter-religious education (researcher's term), the capacities they sought to teach and model, and examples where students had exemplified these capacities. The original interview questions can be found in Appendices D, E, and F; field notes from the first tier of interviews are included in Appendix H.

The first six themes that emerged, in the first tier of interviews and in the first month of reflection upon the transcripts and coding included: dissonance, naming inter-religious practice, teaching and learning, fun/playfulness, flexibility, identity, and skills. Over time and reiterative inquiry, the themes that became most robust included: dissonance, naming inter-religious practice, practice of teaching, relationship, time, anxiety, and finally openness, reflection, and resilience. This study uses both "inter-religious education" and, to a lesser degree, "interfaith" to name the kind of teaching and learning that form the context for the study. However, given the emerging nature of the field, and the interdisciplinary and hybridized nature of the field, it is essential to hear from educators and practitioners to determine what this work is called by them and by their colleagues, students, and participants. The study did not set out to ask what terms were used by interview participants, but in early rounds of data analysis and coding, it became clear that this is an issue that is both still fluid, and still with great emotional and professional weight.

For example, one interview, C., participant spoke of experiencing unexpected conflict by using the wrong term in the wrong context, and admitted that she had become proficient in identifying which name for her work would benefit different encounters or conversation partners. In her first interview, when asked about her use of terms, C. notes,

*Quite frankly it depends on who I'm talking to. I have a funny story about that. The first time I submitted my syllabus for active engagement to the religious studies department here, it was rejected. At that point it was called, 'Interfaith Service Learning.'*<sup>167</sup> I said, 'Why was it rejected?' And I was told, *'Well we don't believe that their religious studies department is a place to be talking about faith.'* I said, 'Well, did you read the syllabus? Because it's actually not talking about faith in terms of one particular faith. It's talking about different religious traditions and how different leaders from these traditions work.' I got back a response, 'No we didn't read the syllabus, but we don't think this is the place to talk about faith.'

*...So I went back and I replaced all the uses of 'interfaith' to 'interreligious.' That's the only thing I changed in the syllabus and I resubmitted it. And it passed.*

But I haven't had the same kind of lived experience of that debate. *That episode with the religious study department has made me very aware of the language in different ways.*<sup>168</sup>

Even when, at the beginning of the interview, participants clearly identified and stated their preferred term, they all used various terms and phrases to describe their work throughout the interview. In addition to “inter-religious education,” terms used to describe their work, study, teaching, and contexts included: “interfaith,” “inter-religious engagement,” “cultural studies,” “cultural intelligence,” “dual narratives,” “multiple narratives,” “dialogue,” “dialogue session,” “dialogue event,” “immersion,” “multi-denominational,” “interactive learning,” and “civil conversation.”

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<sup>167</sup> Course title has been changed to be more generic to ensure participant's confidentiality.

<sup>168</sup> C., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014, emphasis this researcher's.

R., professor and interreligious leader at a school of theology at a large private university, neatly sums the dilemma he and many of his peers face; in his interview he shared the following:

We don't explicitly use that term and *we don't have time to replace it*. We talk about interreligious dialogues, but in the student context, interreligious learning would be the correct term.<sup>169</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this research project to begin to understand how, when, and why educators and practitioners use various terms, but this study posits that agility in reflection (that is, noticing context, dialogue partners, and needs of students) allows for this kind of flexibility in nomenclature.

Similarly, while teaching and learning was not a stated theme of this research, when we seek to understand capacities in inter-religious education, it immediately became apparent that carefully attending to when and how interview participants talk about teaching and learning generally. These interview participants, even when not working in explicitly educational settings, are clearly capable, engaged, thoughtful teachers. The examples they shared and level of reflection on their practice exemplify, in a way, the kind of reflective practice that educators outside of inter-religious education have been highlighting for decades.

All interview participants mentioned, at multiple points, either their own religious identity/ies or mindfulness of the identity/ies of their colleagues, students, and/or participants. While the theme of “identity” failed to fully emerge as a remarkable theme, this consideration of self and other is connected to reflective practice—Schön, Dewey, and McKernan would all mark the importance of understanding the context and potential

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<sup>169</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014. Emphasis the researcher's.

guiding metaphors that are at work in a teaching and learning environment. For our purposes, it might be useful to think of identity as a kind of Deweyan copula that links inter-religious practitioners from their own ethical or religious starting places to their personae as professionals. Remember that Dewey very carefully and logically sets out our process for understanding how something becomes real. He writes,

On the side of the subject the same difficulty appears. The whale is real. It meets us in perception. But when we examine the subject it is at the mercy of the same judgment. There was a time when 'whale' was only 'this.' By a long series of investigations and judgments it has become real. By condensation of knowledge the whale is taken as given but is a concept, a former judgment, 'This is a whale.' The subject is always a union of previous predicates, abstractions. Then the function of the copula being to assert reality, both subject and predicate appear to be abstractions. One abstraction is asserted of the other.<sup>170</sup>

Even while interview participants did mention their religious or ethical identities as either partial impetus for their work, or as aspects that benefitted from their professional lives, no participant claimed identity as essential or required for their work; because religious or ethical identity was not an initial question for study, the researcher did not include it in overt interview questions, but instead sought to discover related concepts or codes related to identity in the artifacts. Identity is difficult to articulate; it shifts, grows more layered and nuanced, can require obscuring or highlighting in various situations, and we are not always aware when aspects of our personal sense of identity is coming into play in our work. This is why Dewey's careful, logical reminder that the "union of previous...abstractions" is always working in the immediate foreground of any sense of either whale or self. A mindfulness of self-in-encounter-with-an-other emerged as an attribute connected to both relationship and openness.

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<sup>170</sup> Dewey, *Principles of Instrumental Logic*, 36.

Dewey continues, describing a process for connecting a “definition and specific case” with the “unknown and unknowable.” He writes,

There are two methods by which logicians have tried to go beyond this point, not necessarily exclusive of each other. First, the reality of which the predicate is asserted is not the subject-matter of the given proposition but a reality which lies behind. ‘The whale is a mammal.’ The subject is not the idea whale, but a reality which lies farther back which is qualified as the whale. This makes judgment unknown and unknowable. If this is true how can we say that these qualities can be predicated of the subject? If the subject is really unknown, how can it be said that subject and predicate can be connected in the judgment? Do not take it as meaning that the two are connected somewhere in the universe, but with a definition and specific case. The connection then is unknown and unknowable. Not two ideas predicated, but the idea predicated of reality...<sup>171</sup>

The research and analysis of this study seeks to discover and make clear the processes by which inter-religious educators and leaders teach. At the outset, it did not seem that so much of this work would be metaphorical, or difficult to express or grasp. However, Dewey reminds us that in the work of reflection, naming the pieces of understanding that compose a working judgment for action is essential—we cannot simply say, these two things go together, this activity is related to that outcome. Instead, we must be as specific as possible in tracing the thought processes that led to our current practices. As we make recommendations from this study, we must remain committed to seek understanding “behind the subject matter” in the work of educators, students, and participants. Personal identity seems to serve as a copula linking the “I know who I am,” to the more unnerving “I did not know this about the world” in the process of inter-religious exposure and education.

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<sup>171</sup> Dewey, *Principles of Instrumental Logic*, 36.

Finally, all interview participants not only named individual skills that made up key competencies in inter-religious education, they often diverged from set interview questions to wonder aloud at the skills they had recently seen at work. This unexpected focus on skills, early in the research process, reminded the researcher that while the focus of the study might be larger and more integrated capacities, learning practices are made up of discrete skills which develop over time, and which themselves can be taught and learned. While a focus on skills fell away in the first few months of data analysis, an echo of this theme remains present in the data on practice of teaching—we are interested in how learners in inter-religious education change, and what they can do with more virtuosic skill than they could before beginning their inter-religious encounter.

Another challenge that interview participants frequently cited was lack of time. Again, this was an unexpected theme; the researcher supposed, at the outset of the study, that possible challenges might include feelings of ill will towards other traditions, students and participants being forbidden or discouraged from engaging in interfaith work, or political tensions related to funding or staffing in university contexts. Interview participants either spoke of lack of time as a challenge for themselves and their colleagues, or for their students. Lack of time is a difficult problem to solve for teachers and administrators; however, some interview participants, out of necessity, are already creating and using possible solutions. The findings from this study can support them in making inter-religious education a priority in their settings, as well as help educators and leaders use data about successful, transformative inter-religious learning to make strategic choices about how to design and implement programs and curricula.



## Data Analysis

Before beginning data analysis, profiles for five of the interview participants are shared, including portions of their interviews, which give us a sense of how research from their conversations fits into the landscape of this study.

Profile 1: J. is a professor of inter-religious education at a small Protestant seminary. J. stands out as an interview participant because both her scholarship and her teaching have been intentionally inter-religious for most of her teaching career. That is, some of the interview participants came to teaching inter-religiously accidentally—either because they were non-Christians teaching Christians about Near Eastern religions, for example, or because they were minority religious leaders increasingly called upon to educate others about their traditions. Or, in some cases, called to teach those training to become Christian leaders about “world religions,” and seeking because of individual commitments and interests to do so inter-religiously instead of speaking as an expert about traditions not their own. Note how confidently she describes her students’ diversity and her familiarity with how they approach her classes.

In both of her interviews, J. moved rapidly and naturally from reflecting on the learning of her students and reflecting on her own teaching practice—both are connected to the aims of inter-religious education, generally. In her second interview, she described a January intensive she had recently co-taught with two other collaborators. She began by talking about the practice of teaching, and then moved to describe the kinds of skills and attributes students ought to learn and practice in inter-religious education. J. shared,

It's risky business: I mean, that week in the classroom reminded me again of teaching at its best and most challenging. It's risky, you are exposed, you are up there and you are in charge...and it's this way that you are trying to create a shared learning community model. And unpredictable stuff is going to happen and I think, I do agree that part of training interreligious leaders is to be prepared for those moments...We did a lot of case study work with folks as well in that class and I think what we are hoping is they will start seeing moments like the one we had in that classroom as another potential case study.

Sometimes we are still 'up close' to these moments, we don't reflect on them to the depths that we might and the classroom is the best place I know to do that. And I hope that people develop the skill set of thinking about events as experiences—not just as things they have to sort of react to, but as learning experiences, case studies for future reflection, like, 'Okay, there is way too much going on that moment for me to process it all then, but now I am going to break it down. I am going to describe what happened, I am going to think through whose position did I understand least, I am going to put myself in that person's shoes.'

One of the things we said to those students with the cases that I think was helpful is: 'If this doesn't seem like a dilemma to you, meaning if the answer seems obvious, you are probably missing something. So put yourself in the shoes of the person in that story who would least agree with your obvious solution or clear perspective and really try to understand—what are the barriers for you to understand why they would differ with you? What is it that makes it hard for you not to understand their perspective? If you suspend this belief and just pretend that's your perspective, what do you notice? What do you learn?'

You know—really trying to...I think that's a key skill, it's: try and allow yourself to radically shift position, perspective, then see what you noticed. We don't do that all that well, suspend ourselves...[we need to know] how to really understand what we see from a different message.<sup>172</sup>

Some interview participants were not as able to articulate their choices about teaching and the success of the students; this study found that instructors with more experience *thinking about their teaching as inter-religious* were best able to frame their students' success in inter-religious capacities. In a way, J. and her peers exemplify a posture of reflection that the field of reflective practice highlights.

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<sup>172</sup> J., in discussion with the author, January 27, 2015.

Profile 2: L.'s work manifests in four different areas; first, she is a Muslim chaplain at a private research university. Second, she is a co-director of a mostly Jewish-Christian program that bridges two small schools (one Jewish, one Christian) and a local Muslim community. Third, she is a faculty associate at a Jewish-Christian-Muslim center on the campus of a small, private, Roman Catholic college. Finally, she is a doctoral student and because her research interests include Near Eastern and Judaic studies, and because of her personal religious commitment, her work with students in those fields often becomes inter-religious. In her first interview, L. talked about her own learning about teaching, as well as her students' learning, in terms of process. Her understanding of parts of these processes echoes how Berling might consider development, or how Boys and Lee consistently undergirded the development of their teaching practice with reflection. L. said,

I also think there's some value in process. So, I wouldn't just automatically become an expert at something...It takes a long process, and then you become an expert at one thing. It means that you didn't spend time doing a lot of other things.<sup>173</sup>

L. spent time connecting her own experience as a learner, her students' reactions, and processes to help them (and herself) remain committed as a learner—in a sense, L. models her own reflective practice and it helps model resilience as well. L. described some potential challenges to engagement, sharing,

I've noticed that some people have a deep insecurity about expressing what they don't know because it might shed doubt on what people think they do know. If I reveal these boundaries of my knowledge base, I might be worried that somebody keeps an impression from that that I am not qualified to teach because my knowledge base is: only this big. Or, how

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<sup>173</sup> L., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

did I not have those life experiences to be a citizen of the world in that respect? How did I, how did I miss something, or...

I think it has to do a lot with people's own fears and concerns about what it means to be...to be representing, maybe, a certain demographic. I think, too, there's some tension. For instance if I'm in the room with a bunch of other, let's say, Muslim academics or theologians, it's a lot more difficult. Because maybe people understand experiences very differently and maybe something that I learned is not the same that somebody else there learned.

And so also, if you have those environments, sometimes people are afraid to speak up because they're afraid to look bad in front of their co-religionists, or look ignorant in front of their co-religionists. Being embarrassed is a huge risk because if you don't know something and it's basic, or if you make a political blunder, like if you say something that's not politically correct, well--that influences the way people think about you.

I often find that it's effective to actually, if you want to ask a pretty honest question, one good strategy to do that is to say, 'I'm not sure why this never crossed my horizon before, but I actually have no idea.' You know, so you acknowledge that you actually realize that this is somehow a glitch in your own way of thinking about the world? And then people, instead of looking at you and thinking, 'Oh, how ignorant' that person is, they think, 'Oh, they're curious and self-reflective and willing to learn,' or something. So, I think, so for me, that's still a little bit where my thought process is going. One skill is to learn how to ask questions that you'd like to have answered in ways that aren't threatening. Just the art of learning how to ask questions of other religious traditions or practitioners, that's--it's a skill, I think.<sup>174</sup>

Even though L. came to her inter-religious work via a different trajectory than J., and may still be working out her pedagogical commitments and preferences, L. also differentiates between the potential emotions, skills, and practices that arise in inter-religious work.

In her second interview, L. agreed whole-heartedly that dissonance is a major feature of inter-religious education, and perhaps all education. She concurred that

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<sup>174</sup> L., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

resilience might be a useful thing to consider, even though she had not yet heard inter-religious educators speak to that capacity. In her first interview, she described moments of her own resilience, and how she modeled questioning her judgment for her students when things didn't go well. L. shared,

[I am learning to] value the areas where I do have some expertise, but always feeling like that expertise, even when I have expertise in a certain topic, it's still growing. There's no arrival, it's just an ongoing process of learning. And I think that's in my students' process in many different contexts too. For instance, even this week, I did one exercise that worked well, and I did one exercise that completely flopped. And I said to them, 'I'm getting the feeling that this totally flopped. And it's helpful for me to know that. And I appreciate your patience with me, and you know I'm learning.' I think that they also appreciate that because then they could themselves feel that it was okay to make mistakes as long as they were actually really trying. And that was part of the learning process. So yes, a willingness to make mistakes gracefully or an ability to make mistakes gracefully.

It's up to me, I'm not making mistakes all the time, but if that means that's how I handle it, it's up to me how to process them. So do I then clam up and not say anything? Or do I not experiment because one time I did and it went wrong? There has to be—this is learning experience, there has to be room for making mistakes. Otherwise where is...? There's no room for creativity and there's no room for experimentation.<sup>175</sup>

L. went on to affirm the importance of “rote learning” for some knowledge-based skills or concepts, and then described the complexities of trying to ascertain which skills inter-religious learners will need to practice in various settings. She queried,

And I wonder, I think there are a lot of people thinking about well, what are the basic skills for inter-religious facilitation and how does it relate to other fields? If we're teaching skills for inter-religious coalition building or something like, what are those fundamental skills, such that people will really just have to do this before they can then [do something else]? These are just the basics that you have to know. You have to know the alphabet before you try to read, right? So do you think that we're going to discover

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<sup>175</sup> L., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

in the next few years a set of basic skills in this kind of work?

I think...part of the difficulty is that so many of those skills are learned through experiences. Like...you could sit around and tell a group of people how to be good facilitators, 'Do this, don't do this.'

Maybe some people are just naturally gifted in that particular area and they don't need a whole lot of practice. But then some people will actually need a whole lot of feedback and for different people different things come easier, and more difficult. So, it's such an individual and most—what...skills people need to learn to develop matters so much with what skills they already have.<sup>176</sup>

L.'s examples of how it takes time to try things out, get feedback, reflect upon it, incorporate it, and then try anew also points to the kind of resilience learners must have to simply remain invested and engaged in learning settings for long enough for practice to move from mere trials to the undergirding of transformative engagement.

Profile 3: S. is an ordained Lutheran minister teaching at a rural Lutheran seminary. She describes her context as it relates to her own academic training, noting,

But of course, within that, my area of specialization is comparative theology, so all of my theology courses almost without exception include comparative components somehow and most of my students are preparing for public ministry in one form or another.

And so for me part of my commitment to this work is because I feel like it's feeding the church with leaders who can encourage and support lay Christians who are wondering what they are supposed to think about this new pluralistic world and the inter-religious conversation they are finding, in their own lives, and again to encourage and support them in that. So for me it's a very practical. I mean, I do all of the academic work and love that but it's a practical kind of church context in which I do most of my work.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> S., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

<sup>177</sup> S., in discussion with the author, October 16, 2014.

S. is like many inter-religious educators who are currently situated in mono-religious institutions. The changing nature of US families (“inter-marriages,” including amongst religious and non-religious partners), congregations, and neighborhoods, as well as public ministries in hospitals and the military, for example, mean that even traditional religious schools see the value in helping prepare their students for work in diverse settings. In addition, professors and religious leaders of S.’s generation themselves experienced inter-religious friendships and families, and their own spiritual development might have been watered or fed by double- or hybrid- belongings.

Unlike some of her interview participant peers whose teaching becomes inter-religious by way of the students’ contexts, or through direct instruction (as in a specifically inter-religious course), S.’s students build inter-religious projects with their future Christian congregations in mind. In addition, S.’s dual role as professor and pastor allows her to reflect more openly on the spiritual aspect of this work. When asked about examples of students exemplifying the outcomes she intends for them, S. said,

One of the assignments that is often a part of these courses is for them to outline, construct some kind of project that they could envision doing in a congregation, in a congregational setting. And so that’s always often really rich. So for example, I have one student right now; actually he was in the military and he is from Virginia. Virginia is his home and he’s been doing a lot of work with Islam because he served over in the Middle East and he said—this is interesting—that because people always assume that he is going to be kind of anti-Islam, that having had these kind of experiences.

But his experience was actually just the opposite and so it’s made him really eager to facilitate some dialogues where he is. So find some resources—some local imams, local mosques where he is, and facilitate some of those conversations and start doing some of that in the congregation, and so he was in my class last spring.

He is a really great example of somebody who really gets it and he is really actually taking that to heart in his own context and I have some other people just do some really creative things that I would have never thought of.

One student did a project on looking at the chanting of Buddhist Sutras and comparing that to...the chanting of psalms and the different musical settings of the psalms and thinking about how the practice of singing or chanting affects how one hears, and participates, in the scriptures. They are really...it's always interesting to me to see where their heart and head carry them—in terms of what religions really spark their interests and then what aspects of that they could envision bringing to a congregation.<sup>178</sup>

Of the seven Christian professors interviewed, only three are ordained. Of those three, one noted that while he is ordained, he is no longer in relationship with his denomination so he no longer uses the title “reverend” and another’s status as a minister is not overtly part of his academic work. In contrast, S.’s sense of calling as it relates to inter-religious education came through when she was asked about what common themes undergird her work.

While other interview participants spoke about a commitment to living with ambiguity about the nature of ultimate truth, S. described the way her confessional commitment both deepens her academic work and gives it meaning, sharing,

I think what undergirds...all that I do is this real sense and trust in God’s overwhelming love for God’s whole creation and the real love and joy God takes in diversity. I just think there is a real—I just think faith is really fun and really great and just opens this wonderful door of explanation, you know. Exploration—it’s like God invites you, ‘Come see all of these wonderful things that I have done and I’m lurking in all of these places for you to find me.’

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<sup>178</sup> S., in discussion with the author, October 16, 2014.



I just have a real radical trust in all of that, and again a deep, deep love for all of that God has made and I want to respect that, share it, know it, all of that and so—and that was true in the parish and its certainly true here. I just have a sense that God's grace is pretty overwhelming and so if I sort of screw up or do something wrong, God is going to sort all that out!<sup>179</sup>

Of the interview participants, S. was the only one to make this connection between her personal belief in God's goodness and abilities and a sense of resilience. That is, S. connects the Christian notion of God's grace (the idea that God can make sense even of our mistakes) to her confidence that she is right to teach inter-religious education and even her confidence and willingness to potentially make a mistake. S.'s teaching also emphasizes a personal spiritual connection in her students' projects. When asked about the kinds of programs and assignments she gave, she described both what students create and what she hopes it means for them, noting,

What I hope—the thing that I'm always hoping to get out to this, is not only just more information generally about other religious traditions—which again, in and of itself, is kind of enough.

But also that they will show particularly, again in the course of the final project, some way in which they've seen their own understanding of a Christian practice challenged or informed in a new way. For me the ultimate goal of any of these classes is that, and again there are some really easy examples that often come up—I mean the way Muslims structure prayer is very different than the way Christians do that.

In some ways they are almost diametrically opposed, but almost without exception Christians can see real validity in structuring the whole day around prayer instead of fitting prayer into the rest of the things that you are doing that day, right?

And so when they look into what's involved in that, the rituals around that, they usually are positively inclined and then to come back and think about, 'Oh, what is this, how am I dis-informed my own practice, or what questions does it make me ask after the Christian traditional practice and

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<sup>179</sup> S., in discussion with the author, October 16, 2014.

understanding?’ You know, that kind of thing. And so that’s what I’m always, that kind of thinking is what I’m always hoping for.<sup>180</sup>

S. did not indicate that her students often failed to succeed in her classes, or were stopped from succeeding because of lack of resilience (or failure to withstand dissonance.) It may be that the mono-religious and pastoral culture of her educational setting provides relational support and gives a sense of shared meaning to the students. However, S. shared that some topics do provoke initial feelings of fear or uncertainty, noticing,

I think I want to say [that in] all my courses, I always talk about Islam because given again the anxiety and misconception about that in Christian churches overall, I feel like it’s really, really important for anybody who’s going to be a public minister in the Christian church to have some exposure to Islam.

And there is usually a high level of interest around Islam just because people are, you know they’ve had...we are in a relatively conservative area of the country and so —there are churches that wouldn’t even allow a Muslim to come and speak.

So there is a high level of anxiety there and the students are aware of that, right? They’ve experienced that typically first hand, and so there is often a really high level of engagement when it comes to Islam. I think there certainly is a concern...at least the question about, for Christians, right? The question that always comes up is the question about salvation. It just seems like regardless—which is fine for me because I think it’s interesting, but there is always that sense of, ‘Well are we in some ways relativizing the message of Jesus?’ And so there is certainly that kind of tendency that you have to work through a little bit.

But otherwise I think most students are...I’m just finding more and more as I teach there is just more and more openness and I think it’s just a greater sense of the reality in which we live, that this is really important and if the church isn’t talking about that people are going to go

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<sup>180</sup> S., in discussion with the author, October 16, 2014.

somewhere where they can have these conversations, because they are so important.<sup>181</sup>

Profile 4: N. is a Christian professor who teaches both in a theological school and in a graduate level business program. He brought yet another perspective to the skills he's hoping his students gain, while again pointing to places of dissonance and the need for reflection. N. shared,

Where to start? I guess, it's a challenge, because when you're dealing with our religious traditions, you're dealing with remarkably complex systems of relationship and of discourse and practices, not to mention, historically embedded communities that then have institutional ways to go with them, in ways that often, intentionally exclude that part of the argument that I make in my last book, [concerning empire], that religions exist to eliminate things—that is, that they limit options for people.

The reason [religions have] endured for so many millennia is that they limit options for people. They narrow down the field of contingency and chaos, to an ordered cosmos through...that goes through relationship and because choices we could make, potentially as human beings are truly limitless. I can get up...and decide 'Okay, I'm going to move to Claremont, California.' It's an option, right?

Because of embedded practices, norms etc., everything that goes along with the society civilization and our traditions. We don't do that kind of thing. So, helping people be reflective about those limits, about the ways our discourses and practices narrow options for us and then recognizing commonalities, across the things we call our traditions and recognizing the differences. It seems to me the task that we set for ourselves in inter-religious dialogue. So it's a first of all recognition and then it's...once we recognize where the limits are, how can we then elaborate? How can we work together?

And the argument of the [book regarding empire is] finally, that religions exist and violence. And if you push them, across traditions-- my contention is that we created, as human being and as animals, we created these...systems to resolve our conflicts non-violently, to engage language, to engage communication, through arts and music and all of the modes of

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<sup>181</sup> K., in discussion with the author, October 16, 2014.

communication that we have at our disposal, aside from brutal force, on behalf of building civilization.

So before they had it completely wrong. Religion doesn't arise from the discontent with civilization. Religion is crucial to the civilizing process. It's often at its very core. In fact, all other ways we construct rituals, associated with everyday life—that's part of our religious heritage. At least, as I understand it. And we identify particular streams of discourses, within practices that we call, 'Hinduism' and 'Buddhism' and 'Judaism,' along with 'Christianity.' But these things are fluid, they are malleable, they're strategies that migrate, and discovering how they migrate and where they migrate and then intentionally engaging our traditions in behalf of the deepest purpose--which is to eliminate violence, with a real challenge before us.

In the 21st century, we've only been at this inter-religious understanding thing for, I like to say, a century. I used the example, of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, which was founded in 1914. It's one of the oldest, most durable, agencies on behalf of inter-religious dialogue, education, justice. And yeah, it was at World War I, an English Quaker and a German Lutheran said, 'Okay, our nations are at war. But our religious traditions mandate that we maintain our relationship,' and out of that came the Fellowship of Reconciliation. But if you understand the long history, that hundred years is next to nothing.

And so, we're still very much in the learning phase about clash practices and what really works to prevent conflict, on the front end, and that create reconciliation after conflict happens on the other. So contributing to that learning, and to the practical work of engaging our traditions on behalf of peace, seems to me as an extraordinarily exciting venture.<sup>182</sup>

N. very rapidly, with great enthusiasm, moves in his descriptions of the purpose behind inter-religious education from one possible impetus (religions were developed to constrict possibilities, we must study this to understand conflict) to identifying the need to both understand limits and work together (familiar from the work of Cornille, Berling, and others) to a recognition that this is work that takes time to an example of a positive manifestation of this work to affirmation that this work is compelling and necessary.

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<sup>182</sup> N., in discussion with the author, November 3, 2014.

When asked about a specific course he teaches, he began by noting that one of his current courses is inherited; that is, he did not design it and he now, having taught it, wonders about the aims of the course. N. thinks aloud about what traits or practices a course *should* be fostering; he reflects,

It's now a semester long course and so—the structured chain. But some kind of inter-religious engagement has been mandated as part of the course and one of the things I would interested in from you is, finding ways to strengthen the integrity via those experiences, in order to make them as valuable as possible.

And as it's currently structured, it feels a little bit to me like a sort of token experience of another and that's not at all what we want to happen. And it seems to me, that the amount of risks an engagement like this is that...is that it becomes one undone sort of experience. I would really like to find some way to lead into the structure of the course, that next step that is 'Okay, given this experience, given these relationships that we've developed—what does this then mean for my continuing studies? What does this mean for my future vocation, the kind of work that I want to do, whether it's as a leader of congregation, or as a leader of a social service organization and agency?'

That it seems to me, in the current configuration of this course, what's missing. Students have an opportunity to write on their experience, reflect on in that way, but there isn't that next step involving...What does this mean, long term? How is this going to change you as a student in your curriculum and then in your ministry, on the one hand or your work with an agency, as a leader around the other?<sup>183</sup>

The level, detail, and breadth of what N. would like to ask of a semester-long course—leading into longer-term practices for his students, documents again the need for inter-religious engagement to be sustained; if students check out or remove themselves from the engagement because of a lack of resilience, they will not get maximum benefit. In a sense, asking about outcomes of inter-religious education gives us the false sense that inter-religious engagements happen singularly, with noted entry and exit points,

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<sup>183</sup> N., in discussion with the author, November 3, 2014.

measurable starting and stopping times. Instead, the multi-layered processes that Berling and others describe, and that are capable of addressing the varied and long-term outcomes these interview participants hope for their students, are more postures of moving in the world than skills that can be, once honed, performed repeatedly without change.

Profile 5: F. is a Jewish professor in a rabbinical school and in a private research university, where he teaches, for example, the Bible and its exegesis, the Qur'an and its exegesis, comparative religion, and religious dialogue. He also works with local Jewish and Muslim groups in his community, teaching and facilitating dialogue. F. reflected on the capacities his students need to succeed, as well as challenges that might keep them from doing as well in his courses. F. shared,

so the students that succeed in my...courses—which are really mixed religiously, ethnically, racially, nationally mixed—are the students who are empathic and are flexible thinkers and who can sort of get into the shoes of other people and are intuitively curious and open to other ideas and also open to self reflection, those are the criteria that are most important.

Conversely the people that have most difficulty are those who tend to be rigid in their thinking, tend to be kind of dogmatic about absolutes and have a difficult time about examining a topic from a variety of different angles and perspectives.<sup>184</sup>

In F.'s teaching and in his thinking about his teaching, he reflects upon his own practice, he models how students should be reflective about their language and thinking, and he creates requirements in discussion and in writing that foster reflection in his students. In his description of the attributes of a successful student, he identifies several characteristics that are related to a student's thinking; these include: empathy, mental flexibility, intuition, curiosity, openness, and self-reflection. Similarly, F.'s syllabi both

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<sup>184</sup> F., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2015.

highlight for the students the fact that reflection is a capacity they will need to cultivate and demonstrate, but also provides examples of ways to begin reflecting. For example, in one syllabus, F. instructs the following:

This course has many goals, but the primary enduring expectation for this course is thoughtful reflection. Your task is to demonstrate that you are not simply repeating back what the instructor or the readings are telling you, but that you can read critically, that you are thinking deeply about the issues that are raised in this course, and that you are able to talk and write about them effectively.<sup>185</sup>

Many of the syllabi examined as artifacts in this study included assignments labeled “reflection papers;” similarly, some course outcomes or institutional goals pointed to a kind of reflective posture, especially in engaging difference. However, F.’s inclusion of reflection as explicitly named and required is unusual. As F. values this skill and attitude, he also uses class time to foster and model thinking patterns that can lead to better reflection. When asked about how he facilitates student practice in reflection, he said,

It is a real combination of things, sometimes I will stop a student and ask the student to be reflective about an issue and try to do it in a way that is not threatening—and I will call attention, because there is so much discussion in the class, it gives me an opportunity to say, ‘I noticed that you used this word, I noticed that so and so used a different term, do you think you were talking about the same thing, would you like to clarify what you mean by this?’ and we talk also about, we are also very [deliberate] about words we use, especially when people realize how often they say ‘obviously.’ Then people begin to try listen to themselves and the kinds of terms they are using and then—therefore the assumptions that are also associated with terms that we use.<sup>186</sup>

Class discussion is not the only place students are required to and nudged toward self-reflection. In the syllabus, F. also provides examples of questions that guide better

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<sup>185</sup> “Reading Scripture” syllabus as artifact, coding line 61.

<sup>186</sup> F., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2015.

reflection along with the assignment description. For example, one assignment prompts students to explore, “Who is the Abraham of the Qur’an?” especially in relation to Abraham’s representation in the Hebrew Bible and the “New Testament.” The assignment in the syllabus asks students to create a chart listing traits, images, values, concepts, ideas, key events, and other notes. In addition, F. provides the following instructions:

This is a summative chart, so you should use all three scriptures. If you see that one or two or all three scriptures portray Abraham as ‘x,’ then list that trait and include the chapters and verses from the various scriptures that can be said to support the claim. I want to see how you can be discriminating in your reading of the various scriptural descriptions. Don’t force it, and avoid essentializing. I recognize that this is not easy because of the different translations and the difficulty in reading some of them. This is an important exercise that we will review in class.<sup>187</sup>

Note that F. includes instructions that help the students be more “discriminating” even as he points out ways they can read and list in service of that aim. F.’s syllabi are peppered with such reminders that serve as mini-models of reflection. For example, he instructs, “Read these passages carefully for what they say and what they do not say. For class discussion, be prepared to answer in terms of insider and outsider.”<sup>188</sup> Here, F. makes explicit what might be merely expected: read between the lines, think about your reading, read from more than one perspective.

The interview protocol provided a structure for the interviews that ensured consistency. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed; the transcriptions were coded and analyzed. Key themes emerged in the coding of the interview transcripts,

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<sup>187</sup> “Reading Scripture” syllabus as artifact, coding line 152.

<sup>188</sup> “Reading Scripture” syllabus as artifact, coding line 218.



the artifacts, and the survey results. This section uses data, organized around key themes, to understand what the data tell us about key capacities in inter-religious education.

### Patterns and Themes of Significance<sup>189</sup>

#### *Too little time*

While time is a necessary ingredient for reflection, many interview participants noted that time is a limited resource.

*C.: That takes a time commitment that I'm not sure we all have. I mean the struggles that we have just in getting this group of ten people together and picking a topic and finding our text, suggest that it's a luxury to do that kind of stuff.*<sup>190</sup>

For example, C. serves her community in three capacities. First, she is as associate dean for the chapel, the primary place of worship for the wider community. Worship is convened every single week of the year, except for the weekend of graduation, where Commencement serves as community worship. Second, she teaches at the divinity school, both designing and delivering original courses for students seeking ordination in their respective Christian traditions. Finally, C. teaches in a kind of modified adjunct capacity in the university's department of religion; in this non-divinity school setting she also serves as faculty advisor for the undergraduate students' faith council, which is the gathering mechanism for all faith-based organizations on campus. C.'s own time for inter-religious education is limited, as she jokes, "I am at the mercy of two of the worst calendars: the liturgical and the academic." Her teaching practice is influenced both by

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<sup>189</sup> A complete list of codes categories with their frequencies can be found in Appendix I.

<sup>190</sup> C., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014, emphasis this researcher's.

the lack of time for her own study, reflection, and teaching in inter-religious education, but also by how her students are often pressed for time.

Similarly, those amongst her colleagues who believe interfaith work is important often do it voluntarily, without compensation, because they value what they learn in inter-religious contexts and what it means for their own work as religious leaders and professors of religion or religious studies. Note a connection, in both C.'s and L.'s interviews, between the urgency of not enough time, and the effect it has on their pedagogy and practices using language. The latter bear out their commitment to this work, even when they and their students are spread thin, and this underscores another challenge inter-religious educators face.

When asked about whether the term “inter-religious education” is the one he uses in his work, R. shared that the term is not exactly right but, “we don’t have time do find a better [term].” R.’s initial interview revealed his perspectives about “dialogue events” and “immersion” (his terms) in two main contexts. First, he leads immersion trips for Christian students to Israel and Palestine; he has made the trip more than 25 times in 20 years. In this context, over-booking the students and not giving them time for reflection is a real challenge, and yet the students’ experiences are much richer when they are not overbooked. We also see here R.’s consideration of the stress of inter-religious or inter-cultural immersion and education; he notes,

One thing we do what is critically important is my main partners have agreed that *we never fully book the students*. I insist that our program does not start before 9:00 am in the morning and end it before 4:00 pm in the evening. I encourage the students to walk around and Jerusalem and visit the places Jerusalem all on their own to see things on their own. The same

is with Bethlehem, to go to walk the streets of Bethlehem meet people and talk to people. *We try not to script it all.*<sup>191</sup>

In this sense, making sure students have time to rest, time to engage, and time to reflect means their experiences are richer and more likely to be transformative.

Below, L. talks about her attention to relevance, in appreciation for how little time her students have. L. shares,

*One of my biggest priorities is to be relevant. I have a huge value on time. If I'm asking people to attend the program or if I'm asking people to do what I'm telling them to do, then it really has to be worth it. And if it's not worth it for them, if it's not adding value, then they might as well be sleeping because we're all short on sleep. You know? And so to be relevant is probably the first thing I think about.*

And audience, how to be relevant to that particular audience. Are these skills that they're going to use in some other context? Is whatever they're doing here, is it going to open their horizons, is it going to make people appreciative of the time we spend together and of their own contribution to the process? That's another thing I really think about too, is the relevance. And then getting people engaged. Like, honestly engaged. Not...for their own intrinsic motivation.

And also I think helping people understand, I may bring certain goals to a specific setting and some of those you may share with me, you may have other goals and I'd like to know to the extent that you're willing to tell me what are your goals. When people feel like you have their interests in mind in a very explicit way, I think they buy into the process much better.

What other things am I thinking about? I'm thinking about giving people resources too, so we might only be able to do so much together in, oh, two hours or two days or the semester. But I want, whatever they do – I want them to have resources at their fingertips. If it's something, if the topic is something they want to continue exploring, *I want them to have more on hand than just what we covered in the time we were together.* And I also want the skills or the content to be transferable so that they actually can take what they learned or a message, a message, the content on message, and bring it to new, new settings as well. *It's one thing to participate in a program or a course or something for a set amount of time, but then if, if it didn't actually impact at least another year of your life, then hmm. You know, I want it to have that impact, too.*

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<sup>191</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014, emphasis this researcher's.

Relevance and impact and furthering personal professional goals, and helping people discern what their personal and professional goals are... When I think about conversations that I have with students or... when we think about questions we have as co-directors, a lot of this is what it comes down to. We have a lot of options here. What are our goals? And, it's not always clear what your goals are or should be. So every time I teach a new course, it's the first day, I ask people to jot down, take five minutes and jot down what are your goals for this course. I always do that. It's like my standard intro day. I'm thinking—in the classroom, you must need to have an incredible amount of energy and be really flexible. Because what is relevant changes, it changes based on what's going on in the world, or based on the institution, or based on the students.<sup>192</sup>

L. connects lack of enough time with both her own growth as a scholar and the relevancy with which her students see her courses. Notice that no practitioner thinks about time in isolation—she feels the urgency of not enough time, and so builds her instruction, activities, and pedagogical choices in response to the scarcity of time for her and her students.

### *Dissonance*

This study uses the term “dissonance” because it is easier to say and understand than Piaget’s term “disequilibrium,” and because while Schön’s use of “puzzle” neatly demands work towards an answer—which makes it well-suited to professional practice—something about inter-religious work requires a term with a bit more gravitas. That is, when one is in the midst of a new cultural or religious experience that rocks her religious foundations or makes her unsure whether she is participating with a commitment to LGBTQ issues, or Muslim Christian issues, “puzzle” seems to take the emotional impact too lightly, while dissonance evokes both the right kind of discomfort and the sense that it will not remain one’s predominant feeling forever. J., an assistant professor of interfaith

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<sup>192</sup> L., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014, emphasis this researcher’s.

studies, identifies a willingness to puzzle as a key capacity. In her first interview, she shared the following:

So let's see, in terms of other capacities, I wrote a short essay about five different virtues and one of them was a capacity to hold simultaneous opposites without wanting to push one out for the sake of the other. This implies a tolerance for ambiguity, an appreciation for paradox, *a willingness to sustain judgments* and a sit with “not knowing.” Absolutism, that insists upon full personal knowledge of something divine or mysterious, is the opposite of this capacity. *And for me, absolutism is one of the most challenging barriers to the work.* I encounter it particularly in students who are coming from a more conservative branch of their perspective tradition.<sup>193</sup>

R. also shares examples of dissonance, noting:

The students do get frustrated, because they hear not dual narratives but multiple narratives.

In fact, I intentionally avoid the dual narrative tour kind of thing. I don't think dual is sufficient for either the Israeli or Palestinian sides. There are not two narratives. There are fifty narratives. The students do find this a little frustrating.<sup>194</sup>

C. echoes their experience, sharing:

For example in that course that I taught in the past four years of the divinity school I had them go and visit a non-Christian place of the worship.

And that's been huge for them. *Nobody's ever asked them to do anything like that before. Nobody's asked them to be vulnerable, nobody's asked them to go to places where they are uncomfortable* and just have for some of them reflections. I get back on these visits, the sentiment that comes back is, this is something I've always been curious about doing but would never have done on my own, and would've been scared to do on my own.

So I'm really grateful for the excuse to have to do it. And now I feel like I'll be more comfortable in interacting with people from at this tradition or doing it again in my own community in a way of building relationships with non-Christians. Because there just aren't places in our life where we

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<sup>193</sup> J., in discussion with the author, October 17, 2014, emphasis this researcher's.

<sup>194</sup> R., in discussion with the author, October 10, 2014.

ask that people unless you have a friend that says, ‘Hey why don’t you come to go borrow with me on Sunday because you’ll know more about me if you do.’ We don’t do that. We don’t even do that, we are told Sunday school is Christians, you have to bring a friend to church day, but we don’t do it.<sup>195</sup>

All learning includes disequilibrium as new encounters bump up against prior assumptions and challenge learners to incorporate new knowledge and experience.

Dewey, Schön, and educators interested in reflective practice afterwards have understood time to think about one’s thinking, emotions, and reactions as good practice when students inevitably encounter dissonance. Finally, many interview participants described part of their responsibility as welcoming or making it possible for students to successfully navigate places of dissonance, to model it themselves, and to create safe opportunities to practice dissonance navigation. In the next chapter, on recommendations, their practices and study findings on reflective practice will conjoin to enable us to make lasting, replicable recommendations for scalable inter-religious education.

### *Naming inter-religious practice*

Interview participants from the first set of interviews revealed the flexibility of their ideas about naming what they do. At the same time, many noted the importance of the language they use to describe their work. Naming conventions in this field are still fluid for two reasons, according to the data of this study. First, the field emerged recently, and arrived via strands from other disciplines. Practitioners coming from backgrounds emphasizing education may use “education” or “learning” after the prefix “inter-religious” or “interfaith.” In contrast, practitioners with professional histories in inter-cultural studies may speak of “cultural intelligence” or “cultural immersion” to describe

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<sup>195</sup> C., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014, emphasis this researchers.

work they agree is also “inter-religious” in nature. Institutional norms also dictate naming conventions: at one university, for example, the Hindu student group must enter the community and engage through “faith council,” while the Muslim student associated is named and counted as a “cultural center.” C. notes this discrepancy, and wonders aloud about why this may not be the best use of categories. She shares the following:

‘Religious life’ is a phrase that I inherited, I mean this is what campus ministers are called here...I don’t know the process of the deliberation that got [them] to call them the religious life. But now they get to campus life.

There are campus life centers here, like the women’s center and the center for African American students and the multicultural center and the LGBT center. Those are campus life centers.

I think religious life is a correlate to campus life and it indicates the co-curricular. But I think that’s more about the word ‘life’ than religion. Interestingly here, Jewish life and Muslim life are considered cultural centers like the LGBT center and the women's center. The staff people for them are on religious life as a courtesy to them, but in terms of where they’re housed and the university flowcharts, they’re actually housed in the cultural centers. Not the religious life centers. I find that to be fascinating.<sup>196</sup>

In another sense, even though there is disagreement about the best way to describe this use (nearly every article that undertakes to address inter-religious education includes a footnote identifying different naming possibilities and the author’s choice, in this case, at this time), those who use these terms daily do it with admitted bracketing. That is, one might say to another, “it’s an interfaith dialogue program,” and because both interlocutors have participated in conversations *about* the term “interfaith,” they use it together in this setting for ease. Teachers and psychologists similarly historically straddled with the terms “multicultural” and “at-risk” do the same thing—they might entitle paper proposals with one outdated term for convenience, but when introducing the topic in person at a

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<sup>196</sup> C., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2014.

conference, the bracketing of “this is not the best most accurate term, but we know what we mean,” is constant and understood. Notice the tension in C.’s example above that comes from co-participants lacking the shared background that can make provisional linguistic bracketing, even on the fly, possible.

In contrast, J. expresses more confidence in her daily professional use of the term, which is supported both by the two institutions with which she works and the development of relationship with colleagues who have gone through the naming process with her. She notes,

I would say *interreligious education* is the most dominant frame we use for our work. I also use the term *interfaith work* to encompass a broad spectrum of forms of engagements and models of interreligious corporation. But increasingly my co-directors and I talk about our work as *interreligious education*. And I like that term, I like that language.<sup>197</sup>

### *Reflective practice*

Reflective practice as theme and capacity became a point of intersection for related values, and became difficult to separate from other skills and practices. Just as the literature review revealed that teachers participate in reflective practice more than they provide opportunities for their students to do so, the interview and survey participants both demonstrated reflective practice and supported it as a key capacity, even if they did not necessarily provide time and space for it in their courses and programs. In this data, time for reflection was often tied to either dissonance or openness. With dissonance, research participants often described disruptive encounters needing time for reflection or absorption. For example, J. describes a powerful exercise on stereotyping that felt “intense and risky,” and created a need for reflection. J. said,

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<sup>197</sup> J., in discussion with the author, October 17, 2014, emphasis this researcher’s.



So just to speak about that stereotyping exercise again, which was a little intense and risky—I think what we realized is that there were so many diverse lines of difference in the classroom, some that were being named explicitly by the content, and some weren't, and everyone was carrying all of that into the room with them in some way or another. And that exercise almost gave us, gave everyone, permission to note and notice. And going into the room, all those things you are carrying anyway—that are often excluded—and we were really trying to say that these things matter.

It's part of how we allow the complexity in ourselves and in each other, right? So if you want to go to an understanding of that complexity in yourself—rather—that's a pretty powerful way of doing it: Asking you to name your own, you know [for example], 'As a blonde woman I feel like people think I am...' whatever the stereotype that you are carrying around. [...] To create a space where you can share that process...

But it wasn't without its challenges and it wasn't without its tensions and we had to do a lot of work over the course of the week to process some of that. And it has actually made me want to go back and retool some of my own skills around managing those dynamics. If I think that's essential for interfaith work to be done well, and I want to be raising these things, [I had] better be pretty confident about my ability to facilitate them safely and understand both the limits of the classroom and what the classroom allows for in terms of what the classroom allows for.<sup>198</sup>

J. describes the way time for realizing what others are “carrying around,” and time to “note and notice,” as related to recognizing that the complexity of others is equal to the complexity we know in ourselves. It makes sense, then, that “time for reflection” can't be hoisted upon courses or programs—instead, facilitators and practitioners need keep in mind that especially dissonant encounters, and in places where openness is highly valued, space and skills for reflective practice will be both necessary and deeply fruitful. As one survey participant put it, “Time for reflection within discussion is crucial—students need to develop skills to think with and across various ideas—coming back ‘home’ to their original position with newness and perhaps change.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> J., in discussion with the author, January 27, 2015.

<sup>199</sup> Appendix G.3: Survey Instrument Questions and Results.

## *Openness*

Most interview participants articulated, in one way or another, examples of what this study calls “openness,” either as attributes of successful students, as behaviors or practices related to successful program or learning outcomes, or as a posture or demeanor that makes inter-religious education possible. For example, when asked if he was every surprised by the work of his students, F. reflected on the way he is moved and gratified by the willingness to be open demonstrated by some of his students. F. shared,

Sometimes I am surprised by the depth of intuitive knowledge that people have, some students have, really young students who are really—[they] kind of have a sense of, ‘I am working for my own world, I guess that you will agree with me, and you can live with the ambiguity and anxiety and not have the answers,’ and who are okay with that. And that is sometimes really surprising and moving I guess, maybe not surprising.

And especially—I have students who come from a very angelic background, who really know their Bible text well and they were taught how to answer critique and they really know this stuff—and yet you see them just working through these issues in such a, a profoundly innocent and lovely way, [they] really want to do the right thing and are really willing to give it a try and that is just really moving for me and I like it very much.

When I get questions from people, [for example] I get questions from a person who is religiously grounded in one tradition, who really genuinely truly is interested in not having the answers, but in really understanding a religious sensibility of another tradition or a person who is representing another church. And that really I find great. And they model that in a class and it is nice.<sup>200</sup>

Note that F. embroiders opportunities and models for openness throughout his courses—he values it as a personal and academic posture, he elucidates skills and tools for openness in his syllabi and course materials, he encourages open-mindedness and

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<sup>200</sup> F., in discussion with the author, October 14, 2015.

language that prevents early judgment or foreclosure in his class discussions, and he hopes that students will not only embody this skill, they will model it for others.

Although K. is in a very different institutional setting, when asked whether or not his students surprise him, he answered in a remarkably similar way. K. answered,

I wouldn't say surprised, not always surprised, that may not be the best way to describe it. I would say, tremendously gratified as I see the changes that people go through and their willingness to confront things. I'm probably not surprised that often, but still tremendously gratified, as I watch students, particularly these midwestern students. They are just basically really good-hearted people and...they are just really, really willing to open themselves to these other experiences, if they've got people that lead them and guide them into that. So, that's a source of tremendous satisfaction.

Note that K.'s assignments ask students to demonstrate flexibility of perspective as they read and analyze canonical and non-canonical texts—they must demonstrate the ability to develop the perspective of those early, original readers of the texts. When they begin their study, they have one religious identity, and read the text with one lens. By practicing a posture of openness in their reading and textual analysis, they build a repertoire of reading and thinking strategies that also serve as places of openness when encountering other differences (for example, when they travel to Israel and Palestine.) Practice with openness in one setting is transferable to other settings of dissonance and difference.

### Summary

This chapter began by reviewing the purpose of the study, initial research questions, methods, and studied population. The research findings were addressed by themes, with examples from the analyzed data. The next chapter will use the data analyzed here to make specific recommendations for inter-religious education,

particularly regarding resilience and reflective practice as key capacities in inter-religious teaching and learning.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future Research

### Introduction

This final chapter will summarize the research, identify the main methods used in the study, and discuss the implications of the findings. Then, after a brief summary of the results, important areas of meaning will be highlighted and the findings from this study will be connected to current gaps in the field as identified in the literature review. Finally, after discussion of the results, recommendations for two key groups in higher education—educators teaching in higher education and leaders working with students in co-curricular contexts—will be made, along with additional recommendations for further research.

The study set out to explore two particular capacities—resilience and reflective practice—in inter-religious education. To research this question, open interviews with educators and practitioners were conducted in two tiers, artifacts were analyzed using a grounded theory methodology, and a survey seeking confirmation from the interview findings was shared widely. In addition to seeking to confirm whether or not these two capacities are essential for inter-religious education, general questions related to other capacities that are fostered in inter-religious learning settings were explored.

### Results

The main outcome of the analysis was the emergence of six central themes, including the following: lack of time, dissonance, naming inter-religious practice, reflective practice, openness, and resilience. These can be clustered around three larger categories: reflective practice (with lack of time as a challenge), resilience (with

dissonance as impetus for needing the skill, and with openness as an ensuing benefit or as a predicated attribute), and with naming inter-religious practice as itself a reflective practice on teaching and learning by practitioners in the field. There exists ample literature on how educators—generally in higher education, religious and inter-religious—understand and utilize reflective practice and, to a lesser degree, resilience as attributes that students may have or need in their growth. However, we knew less about whether or not these two capacities are indeed essential for inter-religious learning; if the research shows them to be key capacities, then leaders in inter-religious education ought to explore how to include them more explicitly and more widely in curricular and co-curricular planning.

Interview participants in this study exemplify constructivist, student-centered approaches that value vulnerability, flexibility, and curiosity. During memo-checking and the second set of interviews, as well as when sharing these research findings, the researcher found that all interview participants welcomed the chance to reflect upon their own practice and explore the study both from their own professional perspective and out of genuine eagerness to know where the field is going next. Good teachers act responsively to many factors in a learning environment; the first tier of interviews made apparent some of those factors, and provided a scaffold upon which to build additional questions and connections for ongoing research.

### Knowledge, Attributes, Postures, and Traits in Transformative Inter-Religious Learning

This study set out to explore the experiences of teachers and facilitators in inter-religious educational setting, and to understand—of all the key capacities that might

exist—whether or not and how resilience and reflective practice play a role in transformative inter-religious learning.

Reflection, or reflective practice, was much more apparent both within the interviews and within the artifacts: it seems that we at least intend for reflection to be part of much of what and how we teach—both generally and inter-religiously. Interview participants often referred to reflective practice in conjunction with instances of encountering new information, stressful or unexpected discussion, as a tool to build critical reading and writing, or as a practice that can enrich encounters with cultural, religious, or class differences. In addition, the interview participants in this study demonstrated great skill in their own reflective practice as they talked about their programs, courses, students, place of challenge, and places of learning. A separate question for future study would be: are those drawn to inter-religious education more or more naturally reflective than those teaching in fields that are more singular?<sup>201</sup> At the very least, reflective practice emerged as an attribute that is discussed a great deal, but is more difficult to implement as a requirement or key feature of a course or program.

An openness to difference, also recognizable in related skills like a sense of humility and hospitality, or “falling in love with difference,” or an empathetic imagination, or internalizing engagement with difference—this emerged as a key concept in inter-religious learning. Especially when we connect what the foreparents of the field of inter-religious education have to say about artful, transforming ways of dealing with difference to the data that are apparent in the interview transcripts—it seems that we

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<sup>201</sup> That is, less inter- or trans-disciplinary, less emerging, more defined, and with more concretized content or knowledge.

cannot attempt to education inter-religiously without accounting for how we will aim to grow with exposure to difference. All interview participants and artifacts revealed a landscape where encounter with the unfamiliar would be a given, and tolerance or mere intellectual knowledge about an other are too meager for even a starting point. Instead, the educators whose voices emerge in this research indicate that students who are most successful in, and get the most out of, inter-religious learning, are students who can learn to practice a posture of openness. This essential practice is closely related to dissonance, another key concept.

All interview participants' data, and all artifacts, included examples of how educators, facilitators, programs, and courses attempt to provide place and space for positive disruption. Some educators spoke of the way they scaffolded readings, first known and then unknown, and left time for modeling open-minded and reflective query in discussion. Other examples included introduction of non-canonical texts alongside canonical readings, service learning and immersion learning projects, dialogue events, and work dismantling stereotypes. Something as simple as a site visit (where students visit a religious or ethical gathering previously unknown to them) is designed to disrupt students' current worldview and provide impetus for reflection and then growth. We need not consider disruption to mean displacement—one thinks of a chambered nautilus, who must, over time, secrete larger, new chambers as it grows. Here is the sticking point: when a new chamber is created, the older, smaller chamber is sealed off, it can't be used again, but it continues to provide structural support and physical beauty in the creature. If our worldviews were never challenged, punctured, or cast with unexpected light, our abilities to literally move in the world would be weakened. And yet, much of our



psychological and emotional defenses are routinized to avoid the unexpected—here is where resilience becomes a key trait.

Guiding questions throughout the study included: What is the relationship between resiliency, reflective practice, and inter-religious learning? How do these two competencies develop in inter-religious learning? What are noteworthy events in the process? What facilitates the learning? What hinders the learning? Who are the key participants in facilitating this learning, and what are their roles? From this perspective, at the conclusion of the study, we find the following outcomes: resiliency is necessary because dissonance is inevitable, and reflective practice provides time for processing and understanding that both makes students more resilient and ensures more fruitful inter-religious learning. This study's interview participants' experiences suggest that teacher-facilitators and students are both learners, and that instructors themselves identify curiosity and reflection as virtues. This appreciation of co-constructed learning and deliberate modeling of openness greatly facilitates the learning. Fear of difference, rigidity in thinking or imagination, and a lack of time for pause all hinder learning, but chances for reflection, time for relationship building, and opportunities for playfulness or fun all soften the possibly paralyzing effects of anxiety or dissonance, and facilitate more sustained engagement, which leads to richer learning. And yet, some of these attributes—time, opportunities for playfulness, curiosity, relationship—are difficult to program into courses or syllabi, and difficult to enforce or measure.

## Artifacts as Evidence and Echo

After the first tier of interviews, the study evolved to include examination, reading, reflecting upon, re-reading, and analyzing artifacts including syllabi, statements of purpose for institutions, programs, courses, or events, rubrics, reflections from interview participants, and explanatory or introductory texts for students in inter-religious courses. These were coded and tracked for emerging themes as well. An index of artifacts can be found in Appendix J and Appendix K includes a table indicating major patterns and themes from the artifacts. The artifacts were coded the same way as the interview transcripts: they were read and re-read and coded as themes emerged. The idea of “reflection” was prominent in the artifacts, in part because many assignments are either called “reflections” outright, or assignment guidelines ask students “to reflect.” This realization prompted another cycle of inquiry pertaining to how, why, and when inter-religious educators ask students to reflect, and if there is a discrepancy between how much we emphasize this skill in theory and how it is actually modeled and develop in practice.

For example, “reflection” was a theme that was apparent in five of the interviews, it was coded a total of 91 times<sup>202</sup> (out of 1102 total codes) in all of the interviews. In the survey,<sup>203</sup> when asked “To what degree to you agree with the following sentence, in describing your teaching or facilitation philosophy: ‘All learners need time to reflect,’” 70.59% of respondents answered, “strongly agree” and the remaining 29.41% answered,

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<sup>202</sup> Themes and code frequencies can be seen in Appendix I.

<sup>203</sup> Survey instrument questions and results can be found in Appendix G.3.

“agree.” When respondents were asked in the survey, “How often do you include time for reflective practice for your students in your course/program design?” the answers were more varied; 29.41% of survey participants answered, “very frequently,” 35.29% answered, “frequently,” 23.53% answered, “neutral,” and the remaining 11.76% answered, “not very frequently.”<sup>204</sup> In the optional space for additional comments within the survey, one participant noted, “Time for reflection within discussion is crucial—students need to develop skills to think with and across various ideas—coming back ‘home’ to their original position with newness and perhaps change.”<sup>205</sup> Even while most survey participants agreed that reflection is essential for “all learners,” the admission that reflection takes time—time that may not be abundant—affirms the connection between time as a resource and the desire to provide time and space for dedicated reflective practice. Similarly, another survey participant volunteered,

Building time for reflection into tight course schedules is a problem. I am not sure that I want to take the full time that I think reflection requires out of course time. That is said at the same time that I agree to its significance. If I want to present the new material with the subtlety and depth that leads to serious reflection, I probably don’t have time for that to actually happen in the course structure. But I do expect it to be built into their lives.<sup>206</sup>

Here is an essential challenge of all education: there is never enough time to do all of the things that will make possible our aims. This is perhaps exacerbated in inter-religious education because inter-religious education is still frequently seen as optional, helpful but not necessary, or related to either personal spiritual development (in which case, the individual should prioritize her own time) or to conflict resolution and peace-making (in

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<sup>204</sup> For this question, no respondent answered, “never.”

<sup>205</sup> Appendix G.3: Survey Instrument Questions and Results.

<sup>206</sup> Appendix G.3: Survey Instrument Questions and Results.

which case, the pressing impetus of religious violence pushes out time for slower-blossoming fruit like reflective practice.)

### Limitations of the Study

Given the sample size, and the qualitative nature of the research, generalization is limited. In addition, the interview questions and survey instrument investigated how instructors and facilitators perceive outcomes in student learning, and attempted to document and measure what was already happening or had already happened. Possible researcher or participant bias might also affect the results.

### A Grounded Theory of How Resilience and Reflective Practice Work Together to Sustain Inter-Religious Learning

The experiences and reflections of the interview participants, as well as the data that emerged from the artifacts they shared, helped develop a theory about how resilience and reflective practice participate as key capacities in inter-religious learning. This theory is presented below in narrative form.

Instructors and facilitators working, researching, teaching, and learning in the emerging field of inter-religious education find themselves here for a variety of reasons. Some experienced double or multiple belongings in themselves or in relationships and sought to incorporate understanding religious and ethical hybridities in their pursuit of degrees in religion, philosophy of religion, Biblical studies, or religious education. Some set out to teach in one area, but their personal confessional practice lent them expertise in another, and this intersection gave them inter-religious knowledge or practice to share with others. Some value not-knowing, pluralism, or relativism as philosophical or intellectual traits, and apply this posture to their work and teaching. All are adept at

thinking about their own teaching, questioning, and learning, and demonstrate a willingness to explore, change course, or think out loud with those whom they teach. All agree that some degree of disruption or deliberate dissonance is necessary for learning, and incorporate places for encounter with difference in their program and course design. While they might not have yet applied resilience as a concept to their work, they share that students and participate need to be open, need to be willing to try or think new things, and need to demonstrate flexibility of thought or the ability to take new perspectives. Many concurred that “resilient” was a valuable term to consider in conjunction with this work. In reflecting on inter-religious teaching and learning, these educators gracefully moved back and forth between considering their own experience, and connecting it with the experiences of those they teach. At the very least, time for reflection is valued by all, even when there exists a perception that there is not time to model or foster it. All participants in this research demonstrated and embodied openness, including in a curiosity to continue to know more about what sustains transformative, inter-religious education.

### Contributions of the Research

The theory presented above is of immediate interest to seminaries, theological schools, and universities that offer courses and co-curricular programs in inter-religious studies and inter-religious education. One contribution is the prompt that we need to apply a requirement for reflective practice with as much earnestness and vigor as we ourselves practice it. It is clear that inter-religious educators demonstrate the ability to reflect and appreciate it, but it is less clear that inter-religious educators understand its value in facilitating sustaining, transformative learning outcomes. Similarly, resilience as

a concept in inter-religious learning has yet to become commonly understood or applied—those instructor and facilitators who understand disruption to be necessary and fruitful may find incorporating resilience as a key capacity to help improve and enrich inter-religious learning.

## Recommendations

The time has come to honor and then move slightly away from religious education streams to reacquaint this work with constructivist educational streams. That is, while Christian religious education has reminded us to practice reflection as spiritually fruitful, general, constructivist education provides guidelines that explicitly foster reflective practitioner development. These strategies and models need to be intentionally and systematically applied in inter-religious education. We need remember that time for reflection is not empty time. Dedicated inter-religious educators face pressures to be relevant, pressures to vie for students' attention when interfaith courses are optional and not required, and pressures to balance universalities and particularities. Sometimes, the research reveals, educators worry that “time for reflection” resembles meditation, pause, or time for students to work silently. Instead, many reflective practices—especially those explored in this research—are active, collaborative, transferable, and applicable to text-based study, service and immersion projects, and pastor or educator training models. The field of teacher education has, for the past few decades, developed scores of practices and models as it seeks to systematize and institutionalize reflective practice; the field of inter-religious education must do the same.

Inter-religious educators must be intentional about defining “safe space,” “dissonance,” and “resilience”—they must model how they do this, both as learner and teacher. If students and participants understand that part of growth includes disruption, and even initially-painful processes of dismantling and reassembling attitudes and understandings, they can name and process the experience, which provides them support and clearer expectations of what it means to be transformed. If inter-religious instructors and facilitators recognize and articulate the value of dissonance, they must be equally clear that withstanding this dissonance is a capacity for learning.

Finally, additional study must be undertaken regarding the following, related questions: Do students and participants in inter-religious education similarly value these capacities and understand them to be essential? If these are universal capacities, what happens when we apply them to settings whose participants are in the minority, or who live and work in places of boundary or hybridity? Can these capacities be measured and replicated robustly? Do some settings provide more intrinsic support for these capacities? What other resources—friendships, co-curricular activities, participants’ personal places of worship or reflection—support or influence capacities that are visible in inter-religious courses or programs? This original study could also be expanded to include a larger sample of interview participants, to explore higher education beyond North America, or to add more quantitative data.

## Summary

This study relied on qualitative research with interview data, artifacts, and survey data, to understand capacities in inter-religious learning that emerged from patterns

including dissonance, lack of time, teaching and learning, naming inter-religious practice, openness, reflective practice, and resilience. Specifically, while reflective practice remained a capacity that can be used with that very phrasing, while the concept of resilience can occasionally be seen emerging in the data, “resilience” as it currently exists in psychology is not so clearly a key capacity. However, the degree to which “openness” and related attributes and traits were present in the data indicates that it is possible that we have not yet clearly understood the importance of resilience as a key capacity in inter-religious learning.

This study found that reflective practice, because of its kinship with narrative and imaginative practices that already exist in religious education, is more easily transferable in inter-religious education. And yet, the quality of “openness” emerged as an important attribute and value in inter-religious work, which presupposes a willingness to engage with alterity, which may be closely linked with dissonance; if this is the case, resilience becomes an important trait to teach, model, and sustain.

A grounded theory of how resilience and reflective practice work together to sustain inter-religious learning proposes that educators and facilitators deliberately apply their understanding of the importance of reflective practice in their creation and facilitation of inter-religious courses and programs. In response to understanding the frequency of dissonance in inter-religious settings, educators can note and incorporate more fully developed notions of resilience. If we agree that inter-religious education requires change, and even transformation, then we need attend to the discomfort that comes from building and then becoming expert at using new systems for engaging. To return to the metaphor of the chambered nautilus, we cannot simply admit that building



ever-newer chambers is necessary to survive, we must also remember that this can be discomfiting work, and the disruption is part of the very endeavor: to be transformed.

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## Appendix A.1

IRB Proposal for  
How do Resilience and Reflective Practice Influence Inter-religious education?<sup>207</sup>

Stephanie Varnon-Hughes  
5 September 2014

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<sup>207</sup> The initial title of this project.

1. *Date:* 3 September 2014
2. *Project Title:* How do Resilience and Reflective Practice Influence Inter-religious education?
3. *The name(s) of the Claremont School of Theology faculty, staff or student conducting the research:* Stephanie Varnon-Hughes, PhD candidate, advised by Professor Najeeba Syeed-Miller  
stephanie.varnon-hughes@cst.edu and nsyeed-miller@cst.edu
- a. *Principal Investigator:* Stephanie Varnon-Hughes
- b. *Department:* Practical Theology, Inter-religious Education
- c. *Others:*
4. *Project Period:* October 2014-February 2015
5. *Identify proposed funding sources, if any, amount to be requested, and due date for application.*

No funding needed.

6. *In a paragraph or two, summarize the objective(s) of the research, including what you expect to learn or demonstrate. Demonstrate a concise formulation of the problem to be examined in light of previous research.*

I posit that resiliency and reflective practice are essential for inter-religious learning. This study aims to determine if these are indeed key ingredients, and to what degree they are necessary (or not). Previous research on resiliency has focused on children and young adults in therapeutic and school settings; some research has included belonging to a faith community as one factor in resiliency, but no one has connected resiliency as a trait that makes inter-religious learning more fruitful. Previous research on reflective practice has focused on the facilitator, not the student. Scores of studies have examined how practitioners from teachers, coaches, therapists, and managers can benefit from reflective practice; fewer studies have examined how reflective practice benefits the learner in those settings. In religious education, reflective practice is an ingredient of spiritual development, but no one has yet aimed to discover how reflective practice influences inter-religious learners.

Supporting research questions include: What is the relationship between resiliency, reflective practice, and inter-religious learning? How do these two

competencies develop in inter-religious learning? What are noteworthy events in the process? What facilitates the learning? What hinders the learning? Who are the key participants in facilitating this learning, and what are their roles?

Regarding the goals of inter-religious education, additional questions include: How can we describe the goals of inter-religious education? How do educators articulate the value of IRE for students? What can participants learn through IRE? What capacities does IRE foster? What capacities are necessary for IRE to take place?

This study uses ethnographic and grounded theory models of research. By interviewing instructors in inter-religious educational spaces (including, potentially, curricular and co-curricular activities, service learning events, interfaith leadership programs, or interfaith program planning), I seek to understand if and how resiliency and/or reflective practice relate to inter-religious education. I intend to draw upon aspects of resiliency and reflective practice already present and noted in religious education as well, as I develop my recommendations for these competencies and their role in inter-religious education.

Through interviewing, I will use open-ended questions to elicit responses about the instructors' ideas, reactions, concerns, and practices. I intend to learn how resiliency and reflective practice—concepts from educational and developmental psychology—can be reconstructed to better understand and facilitate inter-religious education. Then, I will examine “artifacts” of inter-religious education, including syllabi, course and program descriptions, and institutional and organizational mission statements, to help build my thick understanding of how these competencies potentially emerge and engage inter-religious education. Finally, I will conduct a survey of an even wider field of instructors, facilitators, and practitioners to confirm or validate my conceptualizations of these competencies.

*7. A brief summary of any relevant recent literature addressing risks of the method, topic, or population involved in the research plan.*

My literature review will be in three parts, one section for each competency and concept that I am borrowing from education and psychology, and one section drawing



upon how religious education has reflected or exemplified the themes. For resiliency, I begin with literature in child psychology and psychiatry in the 1960s and 1970s on “vulnerable children,” “social effectiveness,” “protective factors,” “temperament,” and “social competence,” including the work of Norman Garmezy, Edward Zigler, Ann Masten, Michael Rutter, and Leslie Phillips. Then, I move into the 1980s and 1990s, covering such concepts as “stress resistant,” “risk,” “vulnerability,” “coping,” and “adjustment,” with the work of the abovementioned authors as well as J.K. Felsman, Eric Dubow, A.L. Rabin, and J. Aronoff. Throughout this portion of the literature review, I will note how resiliency emerged as a concept that could be studied and applied in education.

As early as the 1970s, Garmezy and Masten were identifying examples of “at risk” children who succeeded despite their circumstances. Garmezy in particular sought to lead a shift in researching moving from how to protect children in troubled circumstances to trying to understand how children who thrived anyway did so. By 2006, developmental psychologists and educators had made that transition; the new perspective is exemplified with Steven J. Condly (summing the work of Garmezy, Masten, and their peers in “Resilience in Children: A Review of Literature with Implications for Education”) writes,

...there is a clear class of children who defy the conventional wisdom and not only survive hostile environments but also actually thrive; these are the resilient...resilience is...perceived as a label that defines the interaction of a child with trauma or a toxic environment in which success...is achieved by virtue of the child’s abilities, motivations, and support systems.<sup>208</sup>

Over the course of shifting from looking at children who weren’t thriving to seeking to understand the special capacities that thriving children had, terms such as “invulnerability,” “adaptation,” and “competence” were used by researchers. The idea of “competence” as a positive attribute to be studied exemplifies the switch to studying positive capacities in children instead of keeping track of the trauma surrounding them. Ann Masten, herself a pioneer in this area, tracks the development of the field in

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<sup>208</sup> Steven J. Condly, “Resilience in Children: A Review of Literature with Implications for Education,” *Urban Education* 41 (2006): 211-236.

“Resilience in Developmental Psychopathology: Contributions of the Project Competence Longitudinal Study,” written in 2012. Masten writes, “To investigate resilience, we defined and measured the quality of adaptive behavior...the nature and severity of adversity or risk encountered, and the individual or contextual differences that might account for the variable patterns of adaptation...”<sup>209</sup> Note that current resilience research still focuses on the behaviors and capacities of individual children—developmental psychologists have made recommendations to parents and teachers, but teachers have not made links between what makes up resilience and what can be taught or fostered at school. A current scan of the field of resilience in education reveals studies for teachers *about* resilience and programs that can build resilience in “at risk” youth, but there is no mention of how resilience and inter-religious education may be linked, or can benefit from one another. Currently we know a great deal about resilient children and even about the resources that sustain them. Next steps for widening the field will include linking resilience to specific areas, like inter-religious education, and learning how such connections cause learning to flourish (or not).

For reflective practice, I use the work of John Dewey and Jean Piaget (for reflective thinking generally) and then Donald Schön, Chris Argyris, Anthony Clark, Robert Yinger, John Loughran, James Johnston, and Graham Badley. In the late 1970s, Donald Schön and Chris Argyris drew upon the work of Piaget and Dewey to build the idea of a “reflective practitioner” who practiced life-long learning. The field of reflective practice has been greatly enriched by teacher education programs; indeed, a scan of the field reveals that there are many more resources helping *teachers* become reflective than there is research about how reflective practice might benefit students.

I also use concepts and models of reflective practice from the fields of nursing and healthcare, including the work of Stephan Brookfield, Barbara Carper, Christopher Johns, and Graham Gibbs. I track the development of the concept of “reflective practice,” including earlier ideas including “reflective thinking,” “critically reflective practice,”

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<sup>209</sup> Ann S. Masten and Auke Tellegen, “Resilience in Developmental Psychopathology: Contributions of the Project Competence Longitudinal Study,” *Development and Psychopathology* 24 (2012): 345-361.

“critical thinking,” and “critical reflection.” I attend to how the concept of reflective practice has moved from being a capacity practiced by professionals to being a capacity that can be taught to students and participants. Specifically, I make the move from articulating reflective practice as something leaders, teachers, or facilitators do to something participants and students understand, learn, and practice.

The voices of religious educators who speak to identity formation, including Sharon Parks and Mary Elizabeth Moore, are also valuable, as is Karen Marie Yust’s work on spiritual formation for youth. I will also draw from theologians and religious educators who have begun to explore and document best practices in inter-religious education; these include: Catherine Cornille, Francis X. Clooney, Paul Knitter, Mary Boys, Sara Lee, Judith Berling, Jennifer Howe Peace, Robert Jackson, and Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook. Finally, religious educators—especially those engaged in narrative pedagogies and developmental psychologists round out my review these voices include Frank Rogers, Susan Shaw, Paulo Freire, Jean Piaget, and James Fowler. For example, Frank Rogers and Susan Shaw both encourage reflective practices as a means to more deeply engage narrative. In *Finding God in the Graffiti*, Rogers connects the transformative potential of story-sharing and story-hearing with more contemplative practices; he writes, “...narrative pedagogies can teach for *contemplative encounter*. Recognizing that some narrative texts have the power to mediate the presence of God, these pedagogies cultivate a profound indwelling of a story in the hope of experiencing the sacred reality embedded within it.”<sup>210</sup>

I deliberately connect existing models of reflective practice to narrative pedagogy and make original and specific recommendations for application in inter-religious education. Similarly, I connect resiliency to aspects of reflective practice so that my recommendations for their inclusion as necessary components of inter-religious education are informed by both and made richer by their connection. That is, some aspects of resiliency will enrich reflection practice, and reflective practice will build resiliency; both—I posit—create a richest possible capacity in students for inter-religious learning.

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<sup>210</sup> Frank Rogers, Jr., *Finding God in the Graffiti: Empowering Teenagers through Stories* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2011), 18.

However, these links have not yet been articulated or documented; this is the work of my research.

The literature review for this study includes seminal texts, peer-reviewed journal articles, studies in developmental psychology, resources for educators, religious educators, and inter-religious educators, and reflections by practitioners. This study will further the fields by connecting three currently unrelated concepts or fields: resiliency, reflective practice, and inter-religious education. Specifically, this study will examine how capacities for resilience and reflective practice can be taught, and can benefit the learner in inter-religious education settings.

*8. Describe the population(s) from which participants will be recruited, plans for the recruitment, and the consent procedures to be followed. Is participation completely voluntary? May subject withdraw at any time without a penalty? Will any kind of incentive be offered to participants? Include a copy of Informed Consent Form, which must include, at a minimum: statement of purpose of research, duration of participation for the subject, procedures, description of any experimental procedures, description of risks/discomforts and benefits, alternative procedures, measures to protect confidentiality, compensation, statement regarding voluntary participation, ability to withdraw without penalty, procedure for withdrawal, who to contact at Claremont School of Theology should there be questions about the research; procedure by which participants will get a copy of all paperwork regarding consent, including their signed consent; this information will include the name, title, address, and phone number for the investigator, chairperson of the IRB, and the dean. There should be space at the bottom of the form for the date and the printed name and signature of the participant, the person obtaining the informed consent, and the principal investigator (if different from the person obtaining informed consent).*

10-15 instructors in higher education, seminary settings, or in interfaith co-curricular programs will be recruited; participation is entirely voluntary, without compensation. Participants are welcome to review a draft of my final proposal, to both learn from our shared experiences and give final feedback. Participants may withdraw at

any time, and may choose to stop the interview process at any time. Because I am hoping for interviews from 10 participants, I seek to recruit 20.

9. A copy of the Informed Consent Form can be found in Appendix 1.

10. *Provide a brief summary of the procedures to be utilized during the course of the research. Specifically identify those procedures, tests, or activities that will be used to collect data.*

My dissertation will be in three parts: in the first, I name and explore capacities from educational and developmental psychology that I posit are necessary and instrumental in *inter-religious* education. I will map those capacities onto inter-religious education, and query why and how they are so essential. The competencies I seek to explore are resilience and reflective practice. In my early research of these three concepts in education and developmental psychology, I have not seen any connection to them and inter-religious learning or engagement. And yet, I believe we are at a point in the field where doing the kind of robust research that has marked educational and developmental psychology is necessary. I intend for my dissertation, in naming, mapping, and querying these competencies, to be one small start to this work.

After recruiting 10 participants, I will arrange for two one-hour long sessions with each. During the interview sessions, I will introduce (first session) and review (second session) the consent form, and begin by asking if the participant has any questions. Then, I will ask open-ended questions that prompt the participant to think about and talk about her experiences as an instructor in inter-religious spaces. I will hold as flexible my concepts of resilience and reflective practice, but be prepared to follow up with more pointed questions related to these concepts if and when the participant touches upon them.

After the first interview, I will code, memo, re-read, and begin to draw out themes. I will first interview instructors who have been teaching in inter-religious settings the longest, and will return to them in the second session to validate if my construction of the concepts is correct. Then, I will interview my second set of instructors, who have been teaching more recently. That is, I will stagger my interviews so I get the most from more experienced practitioners which will better inform my questions. I will also ask all

10 participants to share with me their syllabi, course descriptions, and any related program descriptions or mission statements.

In addition, while recruiting participants, I will seek additional syllabi from inter-religious classes from a wider network (including the American Academy of Religions website, resources from the Wabash center). While I am conducting interviews, I will be using the artifacts to continue my grounded theory research. I will look, theme, code, and reflect upon details that either confirm or do not confirm what I find in the interviews.

Finally, after I have conducted all ten sets of interviews, I will share a survey as widely as possible. The survey will include questions about instances where resiliency and reflective practice were apparent (or not) in an instructor's experience in inter-religious education. I will allow participants in the survey to share it with others they know to be teaching in inter-religious settings. The survey questions will allow me to find if my understanding of the importance of these two competencies in inter-religious learning are valid. I will be able to triangulate information from the survey results, the material from the artifacts, and from the interviews to get a richer and deeper understanding of how resilience and reflective practice might affect inter-religious learning.

Because inter-religious education is a relatively new field, and because it is interdisciplinary, there are fewer educators in the field than in other academic areas. Because my field of potential interviewees is narrower, I will scaffold my interviews and interview first those with the most experience. I will check my initial concepts and findings with this first set of participants in their second interviews, and then move on to interviewing my second set of participants. In addition, I will use syllabi, course descriptions, and program and institutional mission statements as artifacts to enrich my sources for thematic coding and reflection. Finally, I will construct survey questions informed by my initial research and widely survey others in the field. In this way, I can get the most out of educators in an emerging field as well as validate my findings.

*11. Describe how the procedures reflect respect for the privacy, feelings, and dignity of participants, avoid an unwarranted invasion of privacy, and minimize risks as much as possible—recognizing that some risk is inevitable. If protected health information (PHI)*

*is to be collected, describe the procedures of de-identification, the minimum information necessary to be disclosed, and who will have access to the information. In addition, describe conditions for a designated individual's access to the PHI.*

I am not seeking any PHI. Although some questions do relate to their confessional beliefs or practices, they do not have to go in that direction during the interview. Before each conversation, I will reiterate that their signed consent gives them the right to stop the interview or withdraw whenever they wish. Finally, each participant will be given the chance to preview a draft of my final report; I include this step both to honor the process of their sharing with me, and to continue to learn from their perspective and ideas about the draft. I also believe it is likely that these practitioners will appreciate the opportunity to reflect upon their work and engage in research that helps us understand how these competencies might best be understood and fostered in this field.

*12. Describe and assess any potential attendant risks. Indicate any physical, psychological, social, or privacy risks which subject may incur. (This includes any request for the participant to reveal any PHI and/or embarrassing, sensitive, or confidential information about themselves or others). If any deception is to be used, describe it in detail. Include plans for debriefing.*

My interview subjects will not be given anonymity unless they choose, although their interviews will be kept securely in a locked computer file and deleted after twenty-four months.

I will be using a transcription service for the interviews; this service has entered into a confidentiality agreement with me regarding the interviews. A copy of this agreement can be found in Appendix D and is also included in the Informed Consent form each participant receives, reviews, and signs.

All of my interview participants are professionals in inter-religious education; on one hand, it would be difficult to conceal their locations and work because it is a small field. On the other, Practical Theology values reflective professional practice and this research welcomes interview participants as co-researchers. I believe the research participants will welcome space to explore their teaching practice. That said, again, participants have the chance to preview drafts of my final work and I will welcome and

abide by their right as co-participants to remove information or even to remain anonymous.

It is possible that the interview might, by direction of the participants, move to their personal religious beliefs and practices. There is a slight risk that this might be sensitive to some participants; if we move to personal beliefs and practices, I will remind the participant that he is being recorded, and that he is free to share only what he likes. No deception will be used. After each interview, I will thank the participant for her time and ask if she has any questions.

When I conclude my second sessions, I will let participants know they will have access to a final draft of my paper, and that they can contact me with thoughts or questions at any time; this part of the conversation will serve as a debriefing. I do not anticipate that the subject matter of the interviews will bring up negative or risky information or feelings; however, I will have a resource list of local chaplains, spiritual directors, and counselors that I can share if needed.

*13. Describe the procedures to assure confidentiality in the use, storage, and disposal of primary data, including how long data will be maintained, where it will be kept, how it will be protected, and how it will be destroyed. If PHI is to be re-identified at a later date, describe the procedures for doing so.*

I will record the interviews on a digital recording device; they will be password-protected and remain on the device for twenty-four months. The audio files and transcriptions of the interviews will be kept in a password-protected file on my laptop. The agreement I have with the transcription service protects the confidentiality of the participants. Participants will have a chance to review drafts of my findings and assertions; I remain open to any correctives they may offer, further establishing validity. Any changes or suggestions they make will be documented in my data collection and reflection.

*14. Describe how the outcomes of this project will contribute to a professional body of knowledge and/or benefit human welfare.*

On one hand, research in resiliency and reflective practice have greatly influenced how parents, teachers, and caregivers support learners, and how institutions consider



what factors help students succeed. These considerations have not been part of the discussion so far in inter-religious education. Also, because inter-religious education and dialogue can be discomfiting and transformative, it is likely that connecting resiliency and reflective practice to inter-religious education will benefit instructors, practitioners, colleges, seminaries, and programs that seek to develop and foster interfaith education and initiatives.

One of the aims of the social sciences is to better understand social interactions. Education—particularly constructivist education—works to build relationships between learning communities, and foster critical thinking and pro-social behaviors in community members. Finally, one aim of practical theology is to facilitate reflection upon spiritual formation and how theology can meet practice—in lived experience. This research is a starting point for considering how inter-religious educators can best facilitate spaces, methods, and encounters that lead to the kind of personal and community transformation inter-religious education makes possible. At the moment, there is not a great deal of consensus about *why* we teach inter-religiously, even if we agree that it's the right thing to do. Further, we lack current agreed-upon learning outcomes that are creative, rigorous, mutually enriching, and transferable to multiple contexts. One benefit to the research findings of this dissertation will be concrete competencies that we can implement, measure, compare, reflect upon, and use to build more enriching inter-religious curricula.

15. *Provide proof that you have completed (normally internet-based) training on the Protection of Human Participants through the Collaborative Training Initiative (CITI).* Please see Appendix B: Certification of Researcher's CITI Completion.

## Appendix A.2: Institutional Review Board Proposal

**[Informed Consent Form for “*How do Resilience and Reflective Practice Influence Inter-religious education?*”<sup>211</sup>]**

### Part I: Information Sheet

#### Introduction

I am Stephanie Varnon-Hughes, a PhD candidate at Claremont School of Theology. I am studying how resiliency and reflective practice inform and foster inter-religious learning.

My contact information is:

Stephanie Varnon-Hughes  
1422 W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Upland, CA 91786  
909.568.3480  
[stephanie.varnon-hughes@cst.edu](mailto:stephanie.varnon-hughes@cst.edu);

Professor Tom Phillips is the chair of the Institutional Review Board for Claremont School of Theology; his contact information is:

909.447.2512  
[tphillips@cst.edu](mailto:tphillips@cst.edu);

Professor Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook is the Dean of the Faculty of Claremont School of Theology; her contact information is:

909.447.2520  
[skujawa-holbrook@cst.edu](mailto:skujawa-holbrook@cst.edu).

I am conducting interviews with teachers and instructors in inter-religious settings. (For the purposes of this research, settings can include explicitly inter-religious courses—e.g. “Inter-religious Dialogue and Leadership,” “Buddhist-Christian Dialogue,”—courses that turn out to be inter-religious—e.g. “Lamentations,” with both Christian and Jewish students—or programs or settings that focus on or foster inter-religious engagement and learning, or simply a class in religion that includes diverse students, where they are asked to bring in their own contexts.)

I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through

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<sup>211</sup> The initial title of this project.

the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

### **Purpose of the research**

My dissertation will be in three parts: in the first, I name and explore capacities from educational and developmental psychology that I posit are necessary and instrumental in inter-religious education. I will query why and how they are so essential.

Similarly, in the literature review, I will name and articulate how inter-religious educators have identified—so far—the capacities and competencies fostered by and necessary for inter-religious engagement and learning. The competencies I seek to explore are resilience and reflective practice. At this point, these terms are still “mushy” in my preliminary exploration; in the last third of my dissertation I will have more finely named and cited them. I think finding out about the competencies that lead to best practices in inter-religious education will allow teachers, participants, and program developers in interfaith education to better facilitate dialogue and transformative education.

### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because I feel your experience as an educator can contribute much to my understanding and knowledge of these topics.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. You can also choose not to answer particular questions, or ask me to turn off the recorder at any time. If you would like to see my typed transcripts of this interview, or read my final analysis, I am happy to share them with you.

### **Procedures**

I will ask you open-ended questions about your experiences in the classroom or in co-curricular settings. I will not ask you to share personal beliefs, practices, or stories and you do not have to share any knowledge that you are not comfortable sharing.

The entire discussion will be tape-recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the tape. The tape will be kept in a file on my personal computer. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed after twelve months.

### **Risks**

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, I do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/survey if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more competencies that are fostered by and should be part of inter-religious education.

### **Confidentiality**

The information that I collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only the researcher will know what your number is and we will lock that information up with a lock and key. I will be using a transcription service to transcribe your interview and this service has entered into a confidentiality agreement with me to ensure the security and confidentiality of your interview. This agreement is provided as an attachment to this form, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have about it.

### **Part 2: Signed Consent Sheet** (This section is mandatory)

**I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study**

**Print Name of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day/month/year**

**I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.**

**A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.**

**Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A.3: Certification of Researcher's CITI Completion

Stephanie Varnon-Hughes (Member ID: 3441392)

**CITI** Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

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### Course Completion History

Institution: Public Access

SBR Course in the Responsible Conduct of Research Curriculum

Social and Behavioral Sciences RCR Course For Unaffiliated Learner - NO COMPLETION REPORT

: This Learner Group is for Social & Behavioral Research (SBR) investigators, students and staff from institutions that are NOT member participants in the CITI Program. You must complete all required modules and case studies before a Completion Report will be generated for you.

Stage	Ref #	Start Date	Required Modules	Elective Modules	Score	Passing Score	Completion Date	Expiration Date	Modules Completed
1. Basic Course	10019902	03/24/13	Completed	Completed	96	85	03/26/13	03/25/17	Modules Completed

**i** See archived completion reports you earned when affiliated with Public Access (covers May 2004 through December 2006)

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#### Appendix A.4

##### **General Information Sections Including Brief Overview:**

My dissertation will be in three parts: in the first, I name and explore capacities from educational and developmental psychology that I posit are necessary and instrumental in *inter-religious* education. I will map those capacities onto inter-religious education, and query why and how they are so essential. The competencies I seek to explore are resilience and reflective practice. In my early research of these three concepts in education and developmental psychology, I have not seen any connection to them and inter-religious learning or engagement. And yet, I believe we are at a point in the field where doing the kind of robust research that has marked educational and developmental psychology is necessary. I intend for my dissertation, in naming, mapping, and querying these competencies, to be one small start to this work.

For the research portion, I will use a form of grounded theory in interviewing inter-religious educators. That is, I will ask each educator about her teaching and experiences in inter-religious settings or inter-religious programs or courses.

I intend to ask open ended questions and then use the content of the interviews as a body of text I can code, theme, investigate, and then return to with new questions and redefined definitions. Given my commitment to constructivism and the relative newness of this field, I believe that this research plan will best allow me to balance a posture of listening with my own scholarly agenda and hypothesis.

Because inter-religious education is a relatively new field, and because it is interdisciplinary, there are fewer educators in the field than in other academic areas. Because my field of potential interviewees is narrower, I will scaffold my interviews and interview first those with the most experience. I will check my initial concepts and findings with this first set of participants in their second interviews, and then move on to interviewing my second set of participants. In addition, I will use syllabi, course descriptions, and program and institutional mission statements as artifacts to enrich my sources for thematic coding and reflection. Finally, I will construct survey questions

informed by my initial research and widely survey others in the field. In this way, I can get the most out of educators in an emerging field as well as validate my findings.

### **Study Design and Methodology:**

#### **a) Purpose:**

On one hand, research in resiliency and reflective practice have greatly influenced how parents, teachers, and caregivers support learners, and how institutions consider what factors help students succeed. These considerations have not been part of the discussion so far in inter-religious education. Also, because inter-religious education and dialogue can be discomfiting and transformative, it is likely that connecting resiliency and reflective practice to inter-religious education will benefit instructors, practitioners, colleges, seminaries, and programs that seek to develop and foster interfaith education and initiatives.

#### **b) Goals and Justification:**

My research questions include: What is the relationship between resiliency, reflective practice, and inter-religious learning? How do these three competencies develop in inter-religious learning? What are noteworthy events in the process? What facilitates the learning? What hinders the learning? Who are the key participants in facilitating this learning, and what are their roles?

Regarding the goals of inter-religious education, my questions include: How can we describe the goals of inter-religious education? How do educators articulate the value of IRE for students? What can participants learn through IRE? What capacities does IRE foster? What capacities are necessary for IRE to take place?

By interviewing instructors in inter-religious educational spaces (including, potentially, curricular and co-curricular activities, service learning events, interfaith leadership programs, or interfaith program planning), I seek to understand if and how resiliency and/or reflective practice relate to inter-religious education.

Through interviewing, I will use open-ended questions to elicit responses about the instructors' ideas, reactions, concerns, and practices. I intend to learn how resiliency

and reflective practice—concepts from educational and developmental psychology—can be reconstructed to better understand and facilitate inter-religious education.

**c) Steps in the Research Study:**

After recruiting six participants, I will arrange for two one-hour long sessions with each. My schedule will be as flexible as possible. During the interview sessions, I will introduce (first session) and review (second session) the consent form, and begin by asking if the participant has any questions. Then, I will ask open-ended questions that prompt the participant to think about and talk about their competencies in inter-religious education and how they understand their class or program to be facilitating that. I will take interview notes, audiotape the interviews, keep a journal during the research study, and participate in self-recursive activities that allow me to re-read material, reflect, journal, and continue to refine both my interview questions and my research questions. Wertz and his colleagues note that, “All the products of analysis—descriptions, interpretations, and theories—have their reference to the textual expressions of another person to which they continually refer.”<sup>212</sup> It is this idea of “continuous reference” that will become a research *practice* for me as I seek to become saturated in the wisdom and experience of the participants.

Additionally, I will collect syllabi from inter-religious classes (so named by participants from whom I elicit syllabi), course and program descriptions, and program and institutional mission statements, and use these as artifacts to further draw out related themes and concepts. I will include syllabi from additional sources, including from the Wabash Center and the website of the American Academy of Religions. The artifacts and interviews will help inform the questions I will use to conduct a survey to seek confirmation of concepts that emerge from the interviews and artifact investigation. The survey also allows me to reach an additional tier of potential participants—including instructors I may not know; I will ask my interview participants and others to share the survey widely in a “snowball” effect. In this way—through interviewing in two tiers, in

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<sup>212</sup> Frederick J. Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2011), 331.



using deep samples of artifacts from my interview group and a broader set of samples from wider sources, and in adding the final step of a brief survey to confirm and validate—I seek to provide robust data and evidence to support my final recommendations.

The scope of my research includes exploration of inter-religious education in higher education, in North America, in seminaries and universities. This creates some limitations: the research will be Western-centric, and will keep me from understanding inter-religious learning in more diverse contexts (for example, in Indonesia where students have religious difference, cultural difference, and language difference). Because this research takes place in higher education in North American, it presupposes participants speak English, share North American understandings of “faith” and “interfaith,” and it privileges a white, hetero-normative, Abrahamic interfaith position. This is unfortunate, and is indeed one of the challenges of current interfaith studies. While I will be mindful of these limitations, I also hope that my findings and conclusion can, in later research, be extended into other settings to explore further related questions.

#### **d) Sources of Data Information:**

I will interview between six and ten instructors in inter-religious education, and the texts of their interviews will provide concrete examples of the subject matter, including my observations and descriptions and expressions from the participants, evaluating the data from both personal and social contexts, “explicating significance through multiple readings” of my material, “attending to key words, statements, and actions,” “identifying recurrent patterns through data,” and “explicating implicit meanings.”<sup>213</sup> I am using interviewing as my method and primary technique, because listening as pastoral practice (*a la* Mary Clark Moschella) is both theological, and fits with my understanding of teaching as vocational. That is, I see teaching as a relational vocation carried out in groups that, ideally, focus reflection and learning for both students and teachers.

I will scaffold my sets of interviews, beginning by interviewing those with more experience in the field. In this way, their responses and reflections will help me firm up

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<sup>213</sup> Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, 375.

and operationalize my initial conceptions of resilience and reflective practice. In the second tier of interviews, I will be seeking confirmation or validation of my initial findings. In addition, I will have data from my investigation of artifacts and from a survey. The survey is the final stage in my research and the survey questions will emerge from the first stages of research.

### **Protection of Research Partners' Identity:**

I will record the interviews on a digital recording device; they will be password-protected and remain on the device for twenty-four months. I will transcribe all interviews—these will be kept in a password-protected file on my laptop; in the transcriptions, names and identifying details will be changed to ensure confidentiality. (A spreadsheet with interview numbers, identifying information, and pseudonyms will also be kept in a locked file on my laptop; this file will be deleted after twenty-four months.)

### **Data Analysis Plan:**

I intend to use the intuitive inquiry cycle to analyze my data information. For example, after I clarify my topic and perform a literature review, I will collect and summarize my data. Then, in “discussion” through journaling, listening, and reflecting upon my materials, I will move into interpretation.<sup>214</sup> I will maintain rigor by checking new information and themes against my operationalized definitions, and I will paraphrase and ask if I have heard and am interpreting correctly during the interviews. I will gather additional data until I have reached a saturation point for my research questions, and will memo check with all participants. If a surprising or unusual theme occurs, I will take time to memo, journal, and return to it with questions in subsequent interviews. Because the participants are the experts of their own stories, I welcome their feedback on a final draft of my report. Their approval and concurrence with my findings lends validity to my findings.

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<sup>214</sup> Wertz, et al., *Five Ways of Doing Qualitative Analysis*, figure 9.1: Intuitive inquiry: Five cycles of interpretation, 250.

When I triangulate the data from the artifact analysis and from the survey responses, I will have a robust understanding of whether or not, and how, resilience and reflective practice play a part in inter-religious learning.

### **Scientific Benefit:**

One of the aims of the social sciences is to better understand social interactions. Education—particularly constructivist education—works to build relationships between learning communities, and foster critical thinking and pro-social behaviors in community members. Finally, one aim of practical theology is to facilitate reflection upon spiritual formation and how theology can meet practice—in lived experience. This research is a starting point for considering how inter-religious educators can best facilitate spaces, methods, and encounters that lead to the kind of personal and community transformation inter-religious education makes possible. At the moment, there is not a great deal of consensus about *why* we teach inter-religiously, even if we agree that it's the right thing to do. Further, we lack current agreed-upon learning outcomes that are creative, rigorous, mutually enriching, and transferable to multiple contexts. One benefit to the research findings of this dissertation will be concrete competencies that we can implement, measure, compare, reflect upon, and use to build more enriching inter-religious curricula.

On one hand, research in resiliency and reflective practice have greatly influenced how parents, teachers, and caregivers support learners, and how institutions consider what factors help students succeed. These considerations have not been part of the discussion so far in inter-religious education. Also, because inter-religious education and dialogue can be discomfiting and transformative, it is likely that connecting resiliency and reflective practice to inter-religious education will benefit instructors, practitioners, colleges, seminaries, and programs that seek to develop and foster interfaith education and initiatives.

## Appendix A.5: Agreement with Transcription Service



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**Non Disclosure Agreement**

**THIS AGREEMENT** dated as of the 8th day of October, 2014.

**BETWEEN:**

*Stephanie Varnon-Hughes*  
(the "Client")

- and -

**NoNotes.com**

This Agreement will confirm the agreement between NoNotes.com and the Client in regard to transcription, translation and related services

("Receiving Party") for the purpose of preventing the unauthorized disclosure of Confidential Information as defined below. The parties agree to enter into a confidential relationship with respect to the disclosure of certain proprietary and confidential information ("Confidential Information").

**1. Definition of Confidential Information.** For purposes of this Agreement, "Confidential Information" shall include all information or material that has or could have commercial value or other utility in the business in which Disclosing Party is engaged. If Confidential Information is in written form, the Disclosing Party shall label or stamp the materials with the word "Confidential" or some similar warning. If Confidential Information is transmitted orally, the Disclosing Party shall promptly provide a writing indicating that such oral communication constituted Confidential Information.

**2. Exclusions from Confidential Information.** Receiving Party's obligations under this Agreement do not extend to information that is: (a) publicly known at the time of disclosure or subsequently becomes publicly known through no fault of the Receiving Party; (b) discovered or created by the Receiving Party before disclosure by Disclosing Party; (c) learned by the Receiving Party through legitimate means other than from the Disclosing Party or Disclosing Party's representatives; or (d) is disclosed by Receiving Party with Disclosing Party's prior written approval.

**3. Obligations of Receiving Party.** Receiving Party shall hold and maintain the Confidential Information in strictest confidence for the sole and exclusive benefit of the Disclosing Party. Receiving Party shall carefully restrict access to Confidential

Information to employees, contractors and third parties as is reasonably required and shall require those persons to sign nondisclosure restrictions at least as protective as those in this Agreement. Receiving Party shall not, without prior written approval of Disclosing Party, use for Receiving Party's own benefit, publish, copy, or otherwise disclose to others, or permit the use by others for their benefit or to the detriment of Disclosing Party, any Confidential Information. Receiving Party shall return to Disclosing Party any and all records, notes, and other written, printed, or tangible materials in its possession pertaining to Confidential Information immediately if Disclosing Party requests it in writing.

**4. Time Periods.** The nondisclosure provisions of this Agreement shall survive the termination of this Agreement and Receiving Party's duty to hold Confidential Information in confidence shall remain in effect until the Confidential Information no longer qualifies as a trade secret or until Disclosing Party sends Receiving Party written notice releasing Receiving Party from this Agreement, whichever occurs first.

**5. Relationships.** Nothing contained in this Agreement shall be deemed to constitute either party a partner, joint venturer or employee of the other party for any purpose.

**6. Severability.** If a court finds any provision of this Agreement invalid or unenforceable, the remainder of this Agreement shall be interpreted so as best to effect the intent of the parties.

**7. Integration.** This Agreement expresses the complete understanding of the parties with respect to the subject matter and supersedes all prior proposals, agreements, representations and understandings. This Agreement may not be amended except in a writing signed by both parties.

**8. Waiver.** The failure to exercise any right provided in this Agreement shall not be a waiver of prior or subsequent rights.

This Agreement and each party's obligations shall be binding on the representatives, assigns and successors of such party. Each party has signed this Agreement through its authorized representative.

Client/Company: *Stephanie Varnon-Hughes*

Authorized Party Title: Doctoral Candidate

NoNotes.com Authorized Party: David Villeneuve

NoNotes.com Authorized Party: Title: Director of Business Development

NoNotes.com Authorized Party Signature: *DVillene*

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## Appendix B: IRB Approval

On Tue, Sep 9, 2014 at 2:12 PM, Tom Phillips <tphillips@cst.edu> wrote:

Ms. Varnon-Hughes,

Congratulations on reaching an important milestone toward your degree!

The first draft of your IRB proposal is quite good. However, there are a few relatively minor questions that need to be addressed. (These issues are addressed in comments on the attachment.)

If you take a short while and address the concerns expressed in this returned form, I am confident that your project can proceed quickly. Your proposal meets the three criteria for exemption from full IRB review (normal academic exercise, no personal information collected, and no more than minimal risk). Therefore, ***your proposal, when revised and resubmitted, will almost certainly be quickly approved*** as IRB exempt by the IRB chair without full IRB review.

However, it is very important for you to understand that, in keeping with federal guidelines, ***you cannot begin research***, not even recruiting participants, until after you have been granted IRB approval.

Again, congratulations. I look forward to receiving your revised proposal.

Thanks,

Tp

***Thomas E. Phillips***

Dean of Library and Information Services

Professor of Theological Bibliography

Claremont School of Theology

Established in 1885, Claremont School of Theology is an ecumenical institution of The United Methodist Church, situated in Southern CA among the prestigious Claremont Colleges.

On Thu, Oct 9, 2014 at 2:05 PM, Tom Phillips <tphillips@cst.edu> wrote:

Stephanie,

Your revisions to the documents are fine. This **minor change** does not require a full IRB review and you can proceed with your research immediately.

Thanks,

tp

***Thomas E. Phillips***

Dean of Library and Information Services

Professor of Theological Bibliography

Claremont School of Theology

Established in 1885, Claremont School of Theology is an ecumenical institution of The United Methodist Church, situated in Southern CA among the prestigious Claremont Colleges.

## Appendix C

### **Informed Consent Form for “How do Resilience and Reflective Practice Influence Inter-religious education?”**

#### **Part I: Information Sheet**

##### **Introduction**

I am Stephanie Varnon-Hughes, a PhD candidate at Claremont School of Theology. I am studying how resiliency and reflective practice inform and foster inter-religious learning.

My contact information is:

Stephanie Varnon-Hughes  
1422 W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Upland, CA 91786  
909.568.3480  
[stephanie.varnon-hughes@cst.edu](mailto:stephanie.varnon-hughes@cst.edu);

Professor Tom Phillips is the chair of the Institutional Review Board for Claremont School of Theology; his contact information is:

909.447.2512  
[tphillips@cst.edu](mailto:tphillips@cst.edu);

Professor Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook is the Dean of the Faculty of Claremont School of Theology; her contact information is:

909.447.2520  
[skujawa-holbrook@cst.edu](mailto:skujawa-holbrook@cst.edu).

I am conducting interviews with teachers and instructors in inter-religious settings. (For the purposes of this research, settings can include explicitly inter-religious courses—e.g. “Inter-religious Dialogue and Leadership,” “Buddhist-Christian Dialogue,”—courses that turn out to be inter-religious—e.g. “Lamentations,” with both Christian and Jewish students—or programs or settings that focus on or foster inter-religious engagement and learning, or simply a class in religion that includes diverse students, where they are asked to bring in their own contexts.)

I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

##### **Purpose of the research**

My dissertation will be in three parts: in the first, I name and explore capacities from educational and developmental psychology that I posit are necessary and instrumental in inter-religious education. I will query why and how they are so essential.

Similarly, in the literature review, I will name and articulate how inter-religious educators have identified—so far—the capacities and competencies fostered by and necessary for inter-religious engagement and learning. The competencies I seek to explore are resilience and reflective practice. At this point, these terms are still “mushy” in my preliminary exploration; in the last third of my dissertation I will have more finely named and cited them. I think finding out about the competencies that lead to best practices in inter-religious education will allow teachers, participants, and program developers in interfaith education to better facilitate dialogue and transformative education.

### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because I feel your experience as an educator can contribute much to my understanding and knowledge of these topics.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. You can also choose not to answer particular questions, or ask me to turn off the recorder at any time. If you would like to see my typed transcripts of this interview, or read my final analysis, I am happy to share them with you.

### **Procedures**

I will ask you open-ended questions about your experiences in the classroom or in co-curricular settings. I will not ask you to share personal beliefs, practices, or stories and you do not have to share any knowledge that you are not comfortable sharing.

The entire discussion will be tape-recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the tape. The tape will be kept in a file on my personal computer. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed after twelve months.

### **Risks**

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, I do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/survey if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more competencies that are fostered by and should be part of inter-religious education.

### **Confidentiality**

The information that I collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only the researcher will know what

your number is and we will lock that information up with a lock and key. I will be using a transcription service to transcribe your interview and this service has entered into a confidentiality agreement with me to ensure the security and confidentiality of your interview. This agreement is provided as an attachment to this form, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have about it.

**Part 2: Signed Consent Sheet**  
**(This section is mandatory)**

**I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study**

**Print Name of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day/month/year**

**I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.**

**A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.**

**Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_



## Non Disclosure Agreement

THIS AGREEMENT dated as of the 8th day of October, 2014.

BETWEEN:

*Stephanie Varnon-Hughes*  
(the "Client")

- and -

NoNotes.com

This Agreement will confirm the agreement between NoNotes.com and the Client in regard to transcription, translation and related services

("Receiving Party") for the purpose of preventing the unauthorized disclosure of Confidential Information as defined below. The parties agree to enter into a confidential relationship with respect to the disclosure of certain proprietary and confidential information ("Confidential Information").

**1. Definition of Confidential Information.** For purposes of this Agreement, "Confidential Information" shall include all information or material that has or could have commercial value or other utility in the business in which Disclosing Party is engaged. If Confidential Information is in written form, the Disclosing Party shall label or stamp the materials with the word "Confidential" or some similar warning. If Confidential Information is transmitted orally, the Disclosing Party shall promptly provide a writing indicating that such oral communication constituted Confidential Information.

**2. Exclusions from Confidential Information.** Receiving Party's obligations under this Agreement do not extend to information that is: (a) publicly known at the time of disclosure or subsequently becomes publicly known through no fault of the Receiving Party; (b) discovered or created by the Receiving Party before disclosure by Disclosing Party; (c) learned by the Receiving Party through legitimate means other than from the Disclosing Party or Disclosing Party's representatives; or (d) is disclosed by Receiving Party with Disclosing Party's prior written approval.

**3. Obligations of Receiving Party.** Receiving Party shall hold and maintain the Confidential Information in strictest confidence for the sole and exclusive benefit of the Disclosing Party. Receiving Party shall carefully restrict access to Confidential

Information to employees, contractors and third parties as is reasonably required and shall require those persons to sign nondisclosure restrictions at least as protective as those in this Agreement. Receiving Party shall not, without prior written approval of Disclosing Party, use for Receiving Party's own benefit, publish, copy, or otherwise disclose to others, or permit the use by others for their benefit or to the detriment of Disclosing Party, any Confidential Information. Receiving Party shall return to Disclosing Party any and all records, notes, and other written, printed, or tangible materials in its possession pertaining to Confidential Information immediately if Disclosing Party requests it in writing.

**4. Time Periods.** The nondisclosure provisions of this Agreement shall survive the termination of this Agreement and Receiving Party's duty to hold Confidential Information in confidence shall remain in effect until the Confidential Information no longer qualifies as a trade secret or until Disclosing Party sends Receiving Party written notice releasing Receiving Party from this Agreement, whichever occurs first.

**5. Relationships.** Nothing contained in this Agreement shall be deemed to constitute either party a partner, joint venturer or employee of the other party for any purpose.

**6. Severability.** If a court finds any provision of this Agreement invalid or unenforceable, the remainder of this Agreement shall be interpreted so as best to effect the intent of the parties.

**7. Integration.** This Agreement expresses the complete understanding of the parties with respect to the subject matter and supersedes all prior proposals, agreements, representations and understandings. This Agreement may not be amended except in a writing signed by both parties.

**8. Waiver.** The failure to exercise any right provided in this Agreement shall not be a waiver of prior or subsequent rights.

This Agreement and each party's obligations shall be binding on the representatives, assigns and successors of such party. Each party has signed this Agreement through its authorized representative.

Client/Company: *Stephanie Varnon-Hughes*

Authorized Party Title: Doctoral Candidate

NoNotes.com Authorized Party: David Villeneuve

NoNotes.com Authorized Party: Title: Director of Business Development

NoNotes.com Authorized Party Signature: *DVillene*



## Appendix D: Interview Invitation and Research Summary

I am preparing for the research portion of my dissertation, and would like to invite you to participate.

My dissertation will be in three parts: in the first, I name and explore capacities from educational and developmental psychology that I posit are necessary and instrumental in *inter-religious* education. I will map those capacities onto IR education, and query why and how they are so essential.

Similarly, in the literature review, I will name and articulate how IR educators have identified—so far—the capacities and competencies fostered by and necessary for inter-religious engagement and learning. **The competencies I seek to explore are resilience and reflective practice.** At this point, these terms are still “mushy” in my preliminary exploration; in the last third of my dissertation I will have more finely named and cited them.

*In my early research of these concepts in education and developmental psychology, I have not seen any connection to them and inter-religious learning or engagement. And yet, I believe we are at a point in the field where doing the kind of robust research that has marked educational and developmental psychology is necessary. I intend for my dissertation—in naming, mapping, and querying—these competencies will be one small start to this work.*

For the research portion, I will use a form of grounded theory in interviewing inter-religious educators. That is, I will ask each educator about her teaching and experiences in inter-religious settings or inter-religious programs or courses.

**(For the purposes of this research, settings can include explicitly inter-religious courses—eg, “Inter-religious Dialogue and Leadership,” “Buddhist-Christian Dialogue,”—courses that turn out to be inter-religious—eg “Lamentations” with both Christian and Jewish students—or programs or settings that focus on or foster inter-religious engagement and learning, or simply a class in religion that includes diverse students, where they are asked to bring in their own contexts.)**

I intend to ask open ended questions and then use the content of the interviews as a body of text I can code, theme, investigate, and then return to with new questions and redefined definitions. Given my commitment to constructivism and the relative newness of this field, I believe that this research plan will best allow me to balance a posture of listening with my own scholarly agenda and hypothesis.

I will also collect syllabi, course descriptions, program descriptions, and even mission statements to use as “artifacts” to support my coding and understanding.

My plan is to interview ten teachers/facilitators/instructors in fall 2014. I would consider all of my interviewees to be co-researchers and will, to that end, share my findings and writing with all participants. This will include allowing time in the process for your

questions and feedback. I hope that this might be an opportunity for you to reflect on your own teaching experience, and experience it articulated back to you in the setting of my research and dissertation—alongside the voices of other teachers in inter-religious education.

Finally, I will use my research to recommend the inclusion of specific competencies in inter-religious programs and courses, and identify specific places and ways they might be included. Next steps might include fashioning course- or program-learning outcomes that include these competencies and assessing how they can be taught/fostered, and if they indeed are necessary components of inter-religious learning.

## Appendix E: Interview Process, First Interviews:

Phase 1: Open ended questions with ten practitioners, one-hour long each

Introduce self, describe project, articulate my definitions for “resilience” and “reflective practice”

Tell them: “We’ll spend \_\_\_\_ minutes on each question.” As if they have any questions.

Draft of questions:

Please describe your present context. (Where do you work, with whom do you work, describe your students or participants.)

Is your context supportive or challenging?

Please describe what “inter-religious learning or education” means to you. Or, do you use a different term?

Do you and your institution use the same terms? Or, do you ever use different terms?

Please describe a time recently when you saw a student or students who exemplified inter-religious engagement or learning.

What keeps other students from reaching this level?

How frequently do you see this kind of student learning or behavior?

Do you think this behavior can be taught or modeled?

How?

When students are able to do really well in interfaith settings, what habits, attitudes, knowledge or practice do you see in them that make that possible?

If you have experience teaching or modeling these, can you tell me about it?

Do you see any challenges to interfaith engagement in your students/participants? If so, can you tell me about them?

Thinking about your teaching/facilitation generally, describe the kinds of activities, readings, and practices you foster over the course of the class/event/program.

Please describe a time when you were surprised by student success or not succeeding in your class or program.

What attitudes, knowledge, or capacities did you see or not see in that student?

When you are designing a class/event/program, what outcomes are you trying to foster in your students/participants?

Where do these outcomes come from? (institution/program mission, personal values/PLOs/faith impetus)

How do you measure these outcomes?

Can you give me an example of a student/participant meeting one really well, and failing at one?

When you have a reluctant learner or participant, how do you help her engage?

Do you see any common goals for all inter-religious education? If so, can you describe?

Looking back over your experience teaching/facilitating, do you see any common themes in your work and experience?

Do you have anything else you'd like to say that I haven't asked?

## Appendix F: Interview Process, Second Interviews

(Begin interview with update on the process, and how the study got to this point.)

Let me tell you about how I'm defining "dissonance," and why I think it might call for "resilience" to be needed.

Dissonance is: 'encounters with new information that disrupt or surprise students.'

Resilience is: 'the ability or willingness to stay with a learning situation for long enough to continue learning, especially in uncomfortable or unexpected learning situations.'

Reflective practice is: 'a process of thinking, especially making connections with prior experience, connecting new information with one's emotions, or gathering questions and related ideas when making sense of new things.'

How does that sound? Does that ring true for you, in thinking about aspects of your own teaching?

In describing what you hope your students are able to do, you described [quote from participant's first interview].

You also said, for example [use examples from participant's first interview]:

"[Quote from participant's first interview]."

Tell me more about [...].<sup>215</sup>

Classroom as safe space? Role of "safety" in RE/IRE?

Can you talk about the differences between "good" questions and harmful questions—is there a point where you are causing too much surprise or fear? How do you know?

Do you have any other questions or thoughts for me?

(End interview with next steps—will send them sections of their quoted material to preview/question/remark, next steps in my process.)

---

<sup>215</sup> All follow-up questions used materials from the interview participant's first interview, especially any pieces of earlier conversation that touched upon themes of dissonance, openness, reflective practice, or resilience.

## Appendix G.1: Invitation to Potential Survey Participants

Subject: Inter-religious education dissertation research, short 5-question survey

Dear [name of potential participant],

I hope you are well. I am coming to the end of my dissertation research in inter-religious education, and wonder if you would have a few moments to help me in my research.

I have designed a simple, five-question survey that should only take a few moments to answer. The questions and definitions have grown out of my research and I am hoping to find validity (or not) with the help of a widely shared survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D3BYQ3L>

If you could take a few minutes and complete the survey, I would appreciate it very much. (The first page of the survey briefly describes my research interest. If you would like to know more about what I am learning, I would be happy to share more of my study and recommendations, just let me know.)

Also, if you have peers or colleagues whose participation might help my research, and could share their e-mail addresses with me, I could also send the survey to them as well.

If you have any related thoughts or questions, please let me know.

In any case, your work and relationship with me and my work has been foundational and inspirational to me over these years of inter-religious work and graduate studies. Thank you for the time and perspective you've shared with the rest of us in this emerging field.

Very warmly, and gratefully,  
Stephanie

## Appendix G.2: Follow-up Invitation to Potential Survey Participants

Subject: (survey ending on 2/6) Inter-religious education research, short 5-question survey

Dear colleague,

I hope you are well. Thank you again for your work and scholarship in the field of inter-religious dialogue and education; it has been an inspiration to me.

I wanted to let you know that I will be closing this survey on Friday, February 6th.

**If you have already participated, thank you so, so much.** If you are able to participate and would like to, I would very much appreciate these few moments of your time.

It is a simple, five-question survey that should only take a few moments to answer. The questions and definitions have grown out of my research and I am hoping to find validity (or not) with the help of a widely shared survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D3BYQ3L>

If you have any related thoughts or questions, please let me know.

In any case, your work and relationship with me and my work has been foundational and inspirational to me over these years of inter-religious work and graduate studies. **Thank you for the time and perspective you've shared with the rest of us in this emerging field.**

Very warmly, and gratefully,  
Stephanie

### Appendix G.3: Survey Instrument Questions and Results

#### Page 1 of Survey Instrument, “Resilience and Reflective Practice in Inter-religious Education”

##### “Description of project and definitions

I am researching capacities in inter-religious education; in particular, I posit that both ‘resilience’ and ‘reflective practice’ are necessary ingredients for inter-religious learning and engagement.

Your participation in this short survey will be the final part of my dissertation research, and will help me understand whether or not my research findings are valid.

For my research, I define ‘dissonance’ as:

Encounters (intended, and identifiable) with new information that disrupts the learning process in students.

For my research, I define ‘resilience’ as:

The ability or willingness to stay with a learning situation for long enough to continue learning, especially in uncomfortable or unexpected learning situations.

For my research, I define ‘reflective practice’ as:

A process of thinking, especially making connections with prior experience, connecting new information with one’s emotions, or gathering questions and related ideas when making sense of new things.”

#### Page 2 of Survey Instrument, “Resilience and Reflective Practice in Inter-religious Education”

1. Think about your work in classroom or programmatic settings. How frequently do you observe dissonance coming about for learners in inter-religious education?

Answer Choices	Responses	
<input type="radio"/> Very frequently	0.00%	0
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Frequently	76.47%	13
<input type="radio"/> Neutral	5.88%	1
<input type="radio"/> Not very frequently	17.65%	3
<input type="radio"/> Never	0.00%	0
Total		17



2. How frequently do you deliberately set out to provoke feelings of dissonance (for example, through your choice of readings, questions, discussion topics, or pedagogical choices)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
<b>Very frequently</b>	<b>11.76%</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Frequently</b>	<b>70.59%</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Not very frequently</b>	<b>17.65%</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Never</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>

3. To what degree to you agree with the following sentence, in describing your teaching or facilitation philosophy: "I believe teaching should encourage students to consider questions that don't have easy answers"?

Answer Choices	Responses	
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>58.82%</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>41.18%</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>

4. How often do you include time for reflective practice for your students in your course/program design?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very frequently	29.41%	5
Frequently	35.29%	6
Neutral	23.53%	4
Not very frequently	11.76%	2
Never	0.00%	0
Total		17

5. To what degree do you agree with the following sentence, in describing your teaching or facilitation philosophy: "All learners need time to reflect."

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	70.59%	12
Agree	29.41%	5
Neutral	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
Total		17

6. If you have additional reflections or comments for me to consider, please share them.

"Since I don't generally teach in a traditional classroom setting, I'm not sure how pertinent my responses are for this general line of questioning..."

"Building time for reflection into tight course schedules is a problem. I am not sure that I want to take the full time that I think reflection requires out of course time. That is said at the same time that I agree to its significance. If I want to present the new material with the subtlety and depth that leads to serious reflection, I probably don't have time for that to actually happen in the course structure. But I do expect it to be built into their lives."

"Dissonance is best engaged within a trusting context--based on durable and continuous relationships. . . at least weeks, if not longer. . . . Authority can help utilize dissonance effectively--again, within structured contexts of trust."

“These areas have recently gained increasing emphasis for us at [redacted]<sup>216</sup> - if I were to take this in 3 months, I would be answering much more confidently that we are frequently and very frequently intentionally provoking high degrees of dissonance (we've just redesigned our ILI around these ideas). Reflection is something we think is very important, but tend toward group reflection to maximize time in a short intensive.”

“Time for reflection within discussion is crucial--students need to develop skills to think with and across various ideas--coming back ‘home’ to their original position with newness and perhaps change.”

“The different interfaith groups that I work with have various working formats. Some are agenda driven and rarely identify dissonance or have ways to work with it. Bringing this topic to them in a conscious way would be a blessing. Other groups are more about interfaith dialogue. They are more relationship based and do put in time for spiritual sharing, attunement, and meditation and prayer. Even bringing your suggestions to this group would deepen relationships and consciousness. Thank you for the work you are doing.”

---

<sup>216</sup> Name of survey participant's institution has been redacted for confidentiality.

## Appendix H: Field Notes

Interview w/ <sup>name redacted 2/3/15</sup> 10/14/14  
 Context: Hebrew Union College (former MAR)  
 ordination for rabbis  
 MA in Jewish ed.  
 MA in non profit management  
 Cantorial program  
 Jewish grad. studies

• USC  
 or  
 reading Scripture in open ed. course  
 or  
 study w/in history sense of institutional tradition (Abraham)

modernist: creative, language, literature

Center for rel. + civic culture  
 new thought:  
 a Modern Jewish Partnership for Change  
 leadership training program of youth

terms  
 • USC: context is secular  
 • rel - officially - academic  
 actually: "dancing in two wedding"  
 rel from inside + outsider perspective  
 • participants -  
 must come from a rel. framework

• HUC  
 intro to bible  
 teaching re:  
 what Jewish leaders should know about Islam  
 "multi religious, multi cultural"

Succeed in course?  
 empathic, flexible, get into other shoes,  
 inductive, curious  
 most difficulty  
 rigid in thinking  
 dogmatic

10/12

how do you help us engage?

discussions, cultural literacy topics

"Rules of Engagement"

obviously

We Muslims believe

only I statements

we always approach it

HB, then NT, &amp; then Koran (Chronological)

yesterday we acted it out, with no script

away  
to loosen up

as come to his house for dinner

Alcanta - a garden of Eden story

relationship "to get to know one another"

we visit syn. church, &amp; mosque -

to get beyond the intellectual - into  
spiritual

deeper realings

heavy with experiential

outcomes

liberate / concepts  
 - practice  
 - language - terms

deeper respect  
 for religious  
 sensibilities of others -  
 attitudinal development -  
 that hopefully  
 transfers

flexibility of thinking -

consciousness of levels of "realings"

deliberate

discussions

10/14

"then people begin to listen to themselves"  
 "a lot of self-conscious discourse" no assumptions

reading - text, you, appearance

### challenges

unacknowledged stereotypes - create real barriers from the beginning that people aren't aware of -  
 they color the way we see a phenomenon

how to develop a consciousness that there is no objective behavior

"I'm willing to not find an answer but with some degree of ambiguity"

"get used to disappointment"

### surprised?

depth of knowledge

when ppl can live w/ ambiguity - meaning

genuine, true interest in not having the answer, but in understanding other

so from evangelical backgrounds, really know their stuff, working in such an earnest, lovely way

25 years

common themes? what do you keep repeating in your work the issue I've been talking about living w/ ambiguity - it's the process, not the answers



Document: Interview  
Weight: 0  
Position: 114 - 114  
Code: anxiety

(some people have a deep insecurity about expressing what they don't know or understand)

Document: Interview  
Weight: 0  
Position: 122 - 122  
Code: anxiety

o when you have a participant who's more reluctant to engage or to explore or to be willing to partake, how did you as a teacher or as a chaplain or as a facilitator, what do you do with that reluctance?

Document: Interview w/ <sup>name redacted</sup> <sub>1/24/15</sub>  
Weight: 0  
Position: 108 - 108  
Code: anxiety

*type of reason  
for fear*

(But I recognize that fear, on the part of people who have been indoctrinated and then  
exclusive understanding tradition)

Document: Interview  
Weight: 0  
Position: 153 - 153  
Code: anxiety

I think the overwhelming one is getting beyond fear and getting to the point where I think the fear because it creates I think that barrier from the very beginning and it's a barrier  
aware of

Document: Interview  
Weight: 0  
Position: 158 - 158  
Code: anxiety

Like, you want to listen, and be open, and be curious and be humble, but you have a very strong conviction of social justice that is somehow being violated. And you have to figure out what is your obligation in that moment, your responsibility. I sometimes struggle with that a lot. We spend a lot of time talking about kind of understanding different feelings and the goals to reach these settings and your role in any one time and place and the potential impact, negative and positive of the various choices you are going to make in that moment.

Document: Interview  
Weight: 0  
Position: 94 - 94  
Code: dissonance

But I feel like that that's a huge ongoing challenge. And it's not one and done. When you do it this way you'll be on the right side of the good guy/bad guy line. I think that might be another barrier, we all want to be the good guys.

Document: Interview  
Weight: 0  
Position: 96 - 96  
Code: dissonance

We do all sort of gymnastics mentally, the difficulty of being open to the possibility that humility is what comes back in here allowing for the possibility that in the situation where either choice made is going to be a compromise. You're going to compromise one of your values down a little, compromise what you hold dear, whether it's social justice versus the social justice stance for example.



## Appendix I: Code Categories and Frequencies

Code System							
	Position	P...	Code	All coded segments	...	Author	Creation date
	0		resilience	16	0	svarno...	2/11/15 4:18 ...
	1		reflection	91	0	svarno...	12/28/14 12:...
	2		openness	119	0	svarno...	12/5/14 8:48 ...
	3		dissonance	249	0	svarno...	10/31/14 3:3...
	4		anxiety	29	0	svarno...	10/31/14 3:3...
	5		practice of tea...	121	0	svarno...	12/22/14 11:...
	6		fun	79	0	svarno...	12/12/14 12:...
	7		relationship	83	0	svarno...	12/12/14 12:...
	8		naming IR pra...	272	0	svarno...	11/1/14 10:3...
	9		time	43	0	svarno...	12/7/14 12:3...

## Appendix J: Index of Artifacts<sup>217</sup>

Course Syllabus: “Scripture reading course in the Abrahamic traditions,”<sup>218</sup> course offered at a rabbinical school and private research university

Course Syllabus: “World Religions,” course offered at large research university and Protestant school of theology

“Guidelines dialogue using narrative,” used by instructor in his setting at large research university and Protestant school of theology

Course Syllabus: “Cultural intelligence for health care settings,” course offered at large research university and Protestant school of theology

Course Syllabus, “Issue of salvation in various religious traditions,” course offered at small Protestant seminary

Course Syllabus: “Introduction to Systematic Theology,” course offered at small Protestant seminary

Course Syllabus: “Interreligious service learning,” course offered at large, private research university and its divinity school

Course Syllabus: “Interfaith perspectives on God and the other,” course offered at large, private research university and its divinity school

Course Syllabus: “Biblical Prophets in the Qur’an,” course offered to students at small Protestant seminary and at a neighboring rabbinical school

Course Syllabus: “Theology and history of Abrahamic relations,” course offered at small, Roman Catholic private college

“Rules of Engagement for dialogue,” used by instructor in his setting at a rabbinical school and large, private research university

Course Syllabus: “Reading scripture in the Abrahamic traditions,” course offered at a rabbinical school and private research university

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<sup>217</sup> After their first interview, all interview participants were requested to share any artifacts from their own work or institution that might help the study understand inter-religious education in their settings. Syllabi were the most frequent type of artifact shared; however, individual syllabi often included material from institution or course objectives, or, for example, language or outcomes from student catalogs or university mission statements. In this way, the individual syllabi helped provide snapshots of how inter-religious educational endeavors participate in wider institutional life.

<sup>218</sup> All titles are only general descriptors, changed from the specific titles to ensure the confidentiality of the interview participants.

“Writing Guidelines” for “Reading scripture in the Abrahamic traditions,” course offered at a rabbinical school and private research university

Course Syllabus, “Islam [intensive],” course offered at a rabbinical school

Course Syllabus, “Holy War and Abrahamic traditions,” course offered at a rabbinical school and private research university

Course Syllabus: “Topics Abrahamic traditions, emphasizing leadership in multifaith settings,” course offered to students at small Protestant seminary and at a neighboring rabbinical school

## Appendix K: Table of Themes from the Artifacts

Co...	Document gro...	Doc...	Code	Begin	End	Weight sc...	Preview	Area	Coverage %	Author
○	Artifacts	Syll...	dissonance	11	11		0 Encourages the expression of different points of view	53	0.26	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	ZOI...	dissonance	45	45		0 What has been the most difficult and challenging aspect of your	87	0.79	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	WRI...	dissonance	67	67		0 One last caution regarding the writing of a term paper: there i	389	1.22	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	ARL...	dissonance	29	29		0 o disagree publicly with respect, and to express compassion for	84	0.34	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	ARL...	dissonance	42	42		0 I expect you to stretch yourselves in this course. There are no	74	0.30	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	ARL...	dissonance	152	152		0 I want to see how you can be discriminating in your reading of	317	1.30	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	ARL...	dissonance	218	218		0 Read these passages carefully for what they say and what they d	73	0.30	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	RTS...	dissonance	130	130		0 Journal entry due next week: After visiting the temple, what five	398	0.93	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	RTS...	dissonance	146	146		0 Journal entry due next week: After visiting the mosque, what five	557	1.31	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	10	11		0 Explore the Christian theology of religions and inter-religious	127	0.99	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	12	12		0 Learn specific skills related to facilitating and participating	92	0.72	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	19	19		0 Theologies of Religions	23	0.18	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	35	35		0 The reasons that Christians should (or should not) engage in m	84	0.66	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	48	48		0 Inter-religious / inter-cultural engagement as the normal appo	188	1.47	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	48	48		0 the construction of religious pluralism in the self-understandi	81	0.63	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	48	48		0 Sailing God's Oceans with the wind of the Spirit - Christian po	96	0.75	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	48	48		0 Globalization and the Ethical Demands of Interreligious Encount	82	0.64	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	13	13		0 Reflect on the theological, pastoral, and spiritual implication	181	1.42	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HR6...	naming IR pra...	21	21		0 Ed. Rebecca Kratz Mays, Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots.	65	0.51	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	MLS...	naming IR pra...	2	2		0 Cultural Intelligence: Leading and Serving in Culturally Comple	75	1.15	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	MLS...	naming IR pra...	7	7		0 cross-cultural communication	28	0.43	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	Syll...	naming IR pra...	1	1		0 Interreligious Examination of Life, Death & What Lies Beyond	60	0.29	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	Syll...	naming IR pra...	8	8		0 awareness of religious pluralism and cultural diversity	55	0.27	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	Syll...	naming IR pra...	9	9		0 through the comparative theological process	43	0.21	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	Syll...	naming IR pra...	15	15		0 Engages in ecumenical and interfaith dialog	43	0.21	svannon-hughes

Co...	Document gro...	Doc...	Code	Begin	End	Weight sc...	Preview	Area	Coverage %	Author
○	Artifacts	Syll...	naming IR pra...	149	149		0 A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism.	43	0.21	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	Syll...	naming IR pra...	151	151		0 Multiple Religious Belonging	28	0.14	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	Syll...	naming IR pra...	50	50		0 Dialog Review on an article that includes some aspect of Interr	80	0.43	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	Syll...	naming IR pra...	135	135		0 Incorporates an interreligious perspective very well	52	0.28	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	ZOI...	naming IR pra...	2	2		0 Acts of Engagement: Interreligious Approaches to Service and Le	71	0.65	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	ZOI...	naming IR pra...	37	38		0 Reflection Papers: Five short reflection papers allow the oppo	166	1.51	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	WX...	naming IR pra...	1	2		0 Toward a Theology of the Other: Interfaith Perspectives on God	77	0.72	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	WX...	naming IR pra...	11	11		0 Interfaith dialogue	19	0.18	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	WX...	naming IR pra...	11	11		0 must be able to navigate interfaith relationships	49	0.48	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	WX...	naming IR pra...	11	11		0 religious plurality	20	0.19	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	WX...	naming IR pra...	20	20		0 Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Re	70	0.68	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	WX...	naming IR pra...	25	25		0 Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfa	75	0.70	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	WX...	naming IR pra...	75	75		0 Interfaith Leadership in Public Life"	36	0.34	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HS...	naming IR pra...	6	6		0 through inter-religious dialogue, education, coalition-building	84	0.97	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HS...	naming IR pra...	79	79		0 Dialogue and Interreligious Relations	37	0.43	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HS...	naming IR pra...	80	80		0 Tri-ologue - Jews, Christians, Muslims in Dialogue: A Practical	71	0.82	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HS...	naming IR pra...	81	81		0 Interfaith Dialogue: A Guide for Muslims	40	0.46	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HS...	naming IR pra...	82	82		0 "Muslim-Jewish Dialogue," in Catherine Cornille (ed.), Blackwel	101	1.16	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	HS...	naming IR pra...	83	83		0 Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christian	76	0.87	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	RTS...	naming IR pra...	6	6		0 as the current state of interreligious scholarship and dialogue	63	0.15	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	RTS...	naming IR pra...	9	9		0 students will be exposed to methods of comparative theology and	124	0.29	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	RTS...	naming IR pra...	11	11		0 Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation	52	0.12	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	RTS...	naming IR pra...	90	90		0 11th Annual Interfaith Celebration Offering Abrahamic Hospitality	190	0.45	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	RTS...	naming IR pra...	102	102		0 "Honesty about Interfaith Dialogue.	35	0.08	svannon-hughes
○	Artifacts	RTS...	naming IR pra...	162	162		0 interreligious leader reflects on his upbringing within a multi	79	0.19	svannon-hughes

Co.	Document gr...	Doc.	Code	Begin	End	Weight %	Preview	Area	Coverage %	Author	C.
Artifacts	RTS	RTS	naming lit pra...	165	165	0	Debating "rhetoric" and Dialogue: Our int. Perspectives	34	0.23	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	RTS	RTS	naming lit pra...	167	167	0	Building Interreligious Communities, Coalitions, and Methods	65	0.15	swanson-highes	2115
Artifacts	RTS	RTS	naming lit pra...	189	169	0	The Role of Theological Seminars in Increasing Interfaith Coo	92	0.22	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	2	2	0	Religious Leadership in a Multi-Religious Society	49	0.28	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	10	10	0	Assistant Professor of Interfaith Studies	41	0.20	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	20	20	0	The interfaith studies curriculum requirements	47	0.34	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	23	23	0	Interfaith relationship buildin	35	0.25	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	25	25	0	Assessing a dilemma with interreligious dimensions	21	0.15	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	36	36	0	An interreligious case study	28	0.20	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	44	44	0	Interfaith work	15	0.11	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	46	46	0	Interfaith Youth Work	21	0.15	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	47	47	0	Interfaith Dialogue at the Casa Rector	18	0.28	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	47	47	0	"The History of Interreligious Dialogue"	41	0.30	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	48	48	0	The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue	58	0.42	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	48	48	0	Sources of interreligious encounter, Growth, and Transformation	63	0.46	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	55	55	0	Interreligious work	20	0.15	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	58	58	0	Conditions for inter-religious Dialogue	39	0.28	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	60	60	0	Interfaith Dialogue	19	0.14	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	67	67	0	Interreligious engagement	25	0.18	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	68	68	0	Interreligious context	22	0.16	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	82	82	0	An important interfaith role model	34	0.25	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	84	84	0	Inter-religious Work at the Intersection of Identities	54	0.39	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	85	85	0	Interreligious work	19	0.14	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	94	94	0	My Ever-Present Interfaith Interlocutors	40	0.29	swanson-highes	2112

Co.	Document gr...	Doc.	Code	Begin	End	Weight %	Preview	Area	Coverage %	Author	C.
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	97	97	0	Journal of Inter-Religious Studies	34	0.23	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	102	102	0	Interreligious Responsibility	29	0.21	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	107	107	0	Journal of Inter-Religious Studies	34	0.25	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	108	108	0	Interreligious Education & US Religious Schools	50	0.36	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	109	112	0	Interreligious Education and US Religious Schools Responses to	424	3.07	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	118	118	0	Disruptive, An open mind and open heart, will progress to learn ne	205	1.60	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	42	42	0	Religious Growth in the Homeless or Neighborhood will be graded	119	0.93	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	48	48	0	Cloning Thoughts - Sailing Coast's Ocean with the wind of the 50	115	0.90	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	10	10	0	Seeds our new opportunities for faith conversations	51	0.25	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	18	18	0	However, note that you cannot necessarily "prove" your point. b	190	0.60	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	29	29	0	a dialogue publicly with respect, and to express compassion for	84	0.24	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	152	152	0	I want to see how you can be discriminating in your reading of	317	1.20	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	218	218	0	Read these passages carefully for what they say and what they d	73	0.30	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	6	6	0	We all need to come to dialogue with a combination of humility	338	7.54	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	7	7	0	Don't worry! You will break the rules sometimes. We all do. So w	224	5.02	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	5	5	0	Updates: Change which reading. Too difficult. Less so the fat	1874	6.54	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	152	152	0	I want to see how you can be discriminating in your reading of	317	1.20	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	16	16	0	Just learned about the Aikido method. We might use this in our	66	1.48	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	88	88	0	These authors represent different ways to approach religion. M	674	1.58	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	9	9	0	Can an appreciation of and effect on the situation of religio	109	0.85	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	11	11	0	and effect theologically on that experience.	45	0.35	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	7	7	0	offering resources for theological reflection on tasks of indiv	125	0.38	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	13	13	0	Reflect on the theological, pastoral, and spiritual implication	181	1.42	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	55	55	0	Theological Reflection Paper: The Question of Universal Salvat	65	0.31	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	57	58	0	Short reflection papers. Three times in the semester students	100	0.48	swanson-highes	2112

Co.	Document gr...	Doc.	Code	Begin	End	Weight %	Preview	Area	Coverage %	Author	C.
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	116	116	0	Deconstruct the discussion by drawing on other readings, or comment	172	0.81	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	46	47	0	Theological Reflection Papers: Two times throughout the semester	153	0.82	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	54	54	0	Theological Reflection Paper: Day 106	34	0.18	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	99	99	0	First Theological Reflection Paper: Day	38	0.20	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	15	15	0	Reflect critically on the interactions between course work and	83	0.75	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	43	46	0	When have you learned about yourself... about the local communit	502	4.57	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	49	49	0	A final paper of 4,000-5,000 words will invite reflection on th	123	1.12	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	69	69	0	Reflection on service and introduction to Jewish Ethics	55	0.50	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	83	84	0	a brief reflection from more than 1000 words) should be submitte	100	0.94	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	37	37	0	Data participation & reading reflections	41	0.38	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	40	40	0	Reading carefully and thoroughly requires paying close attento	688	2.40	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	5	5	0	Read this information carefully. Read it again. Then meditate o	67	0.78	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	42	42	0	Your final paragraph(s) should include your own personal view o	247	0.78	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	61	61	0	This course has many goals, but the primary enduring expectatio	402	1.55	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	132	132	0	I want to see how you can be discriminating in your reading of	317	1.20	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	218	218	0	Read these passages carefully for what they say and what they d	73	0.30	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	3	4	0	Why does serious discussion often break down into angry argumen	254	5.70	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	17	23	0	Asked... breaking down difficult questions. When a difficult, we	647	15.41	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	23	23	0	You are advised to read the required assignment one or more tim	491	1.15	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	23	23	0	You are also highly encouraged to attend and write reflections	265	0.62	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	51	59	0	CHECKLIST for SUCCESSFUL REFLECTIONS - Language is precise and	653	1.55	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	70	70	0	Journal entry due next week in class. What expectations do you	182	0.43	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	130	130	0	Journal entry due next week. After visiting the temple, what the	398	0.93	swanson-highes	2112
Artifacts	WR	WR	naming lit pra...	146	146	0	Journal entry due next week. After visiting the mosque, what the	557	1.31	swanson-highes	2112

O	Artifacts	Syll...	reflection	17	17	O Each week you will post a reflection (500-750 words) that discu	197	0.95	svarnon-hughes
O	Artifacts	Syll...	reflection	24	24	O After each class you will compose a short journal entry that re	1066	5.16	svarnon-hughes
O	Artifacts	Syll...	reflection	30	30	O Each week we will open with 1-2 short student opening reflectio	106	0.51	svarnon-hughes
	Artifacts	Rul...	relationship	7	7	O Don't worry! You will break the rules sometime. We all do. So w	224	5.02	svarnon-hughes
	Artifacts	Rul...	relationship	14	14	O "Ouch!" - Sometimes things hurt. Your discussion partner may no	349	7.83	svarnon-hughes
	Artifacts	Rul...	relationship	21	21	O Statement or Question? - Is this an honest question or are they	106	2.38	svarnon-hughes
	Artifacts	RTS...	relationship	70	70	O How do you envision yourself contributing to our classroom?	59	0.14	svarnon-hughes